Sir Jayin Rajat 1827

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AN
Examination of the Advantages
OF
SOLITUDE;

AND OF ITS OPERATIONS ON THE HEART AND MIND;

WITH

AN ENQUIRY

Into its prejudicial Influence on the

IMAGINATION AND PASSIONS.

Translated from the German of

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And Knight of the Russian Order of Wladomir.

WITH

EXPLANATORY NOTES.

To which is prefixed,

A BIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNT OF THE AUTHOR.

"What call'st thou *Solitude*?"

MILTON.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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SOLITUDE.

CHAP. VII.

BENEFICIAL INFLUENCE OF SOLITUDE

ON THE HEART, IN EXILE, IN OLD AGE, AND ON THE BED OF DEATH.

HAVING now considered the beneficial influence of Solitude upon the heart, I shall proceed to the important question: whether it is not easier to live virtuously in Solitude than in the world. It will then be left to consider, the happiness in general, which Solitude procures for the heart; its advantages in old age, its tendency to lead us to God and to prepare the soul for eternity.

In society many good actions are performed out of duty. The divine instructs and consoles, the lawyer procures justice, the physician visits his patients and cures them, well or ill, and all out of humanity, say these gentlemen. Nothing can be more false; the divine dispenses consolation, the lawyer obtains justice and the physician cures, not always from the impulse of the heart, but because

he must, because it is his duty; because the one must do honor to his gown, the second belongs to this or that court, and the third displays such or such a sign. *Your known humanity*, an expression which always shocks my feelings, and with which the contents of a thousand letters I have received are introduced, is nothing more than the style of cold formality, adulation, and falsehood. Humanity is a virtue, one of the noblest and most exalted qualities of the soul; and how can any one discover whether I do this or that from a principle of virtue, or because it is my duty?

Good works, therefore, do not always flow from motives of piety and virtue. The heart of that man, who never entirely withdraws himself from the affairs of the world, is frequently hardened to every sentiment of benevolence. It is possible to do good, and yet not be virtuous; to be great in action and little in heart.* Virtue is much more rare than it is imagined to be. We should, therefore, be frugal of such words as humanity, virtue, patriotism; they should be employed only on great occasions; for by too frequent use, their meaning is weakened, and the qualities they are intended to signify, are brought into contempt. Who would not blush to be called learned and humane, when he hears the knowledge of the most ignorant wretches applauded, and the well-known humanity of the greatest villains extolled!

Virtue is practised in Solitude with much greater

* *Viri potestatibus sublimes*, says Lord Chancellor Bacon, *ipsi sibi ignoti sunt. Et dum negotiis distrahuntur, tempore carent, quo sanitati aut corporis, aut animæ suæ consulant.*

facility and freedom than in the world. In Solitude no man is ashamed of virtue; in the world, on the contrary, she glides along with timid step, and shrinks, abashed, from public view. An intercourse with the world is an education in vice. With the most virtuous resolutions, we all commit faults every day of our lives, surrounded as we are by so many snares and dangers. Many, who perform distinguished parts on the theatre of life, are, perhaps, deficient in virtuous resolutions; others form good resolutions, but their actions are vicious. In the morning, in the retirement of our chamber, before we are absorbed in the vortex of business, we are perhaps completely virtuous, impartial, and free; we are not then vexed by contradiction. But, with the greatest vigilance and attention, we never remain masters of ourselves during the whole day, if we are oppressed with cares and vexations, employed in a multitude of disgusting occupations, involved in connections with various descriptions of men, and implicated in a thousand circumstances, equally unexpected and disagreeable.

A celebrated Scottish philosopher and divine * makes this excellent observation: "It is the peculiar effect of virtue to make a man's chief happiness arise from himself and his own conduct. A bad man is wholly the creature of the world. He hangs upon its favor, lives by its smiles, and is happy or miserable in proportion to his success. But, to a virtuous man, success in worldly matters is but a secondary object. To discharge his own part with integrity and honor is his chief aim; having

* Dr. Blair.

done properly what was incumbent on him to do, his mind is at rest; and he leaves the event to Providence. His witness is in heaven, and his record is on high. Satisfied with the approbation of God, and the testimony of a good conscience, he enjoys himself, and despises the triumphs of guilt. In proportion as such manly principles rule your heart, you will become independent of the world, and will forbear complaining of its discouragements."

To recommend this independence of the world, is the view and aim of the little philosophy contained in this work on Solitude. I wish not to lead men into deserts, nor to confine them to the habitations of owls; but to remove from their minds the fear of the world and of mankind. I would, as far as it is practicable, render them independent; I would break their fetters, inspire them with a contempt of the world and a love of Solitude, that they may be able to say, at least, for two hours in the day: *We are free.*

This independence cannot be displeasing to the greatest enemies of liberty; for it simply leads to the rational employment of Solitude. It is a collection of the soul, for the purpose of strengthening and renewing its virtuous sentiments, by which we are rendered more able and more anxious to fulfil the duties of our respective stations.

True apostles of Solitude have said: "It is only by the judicious employment of the hours of independent leisure, that we adopt firm and solid resolutions for governing our minds, and guiding our conduct. It is only then, that we can reflect, without interruption, on the occurrences of our lives, the temptations to which we are most exposed, the

weak sides of the heart which require to be guarded with the greatest vigilance; and previously arm ourselves against every future danger we may have to encounter in the commerce with society. Though virtue, remote from the enjoyments of the world, may at first appear to contract the limits of pleasure, yet, upon reflection, it is found, in reality, to extend them. If it restrain from excess in some pleasures, it favors and increases others: it precludes us from none, but such as are either fantastic and imaginary, or prejudicial and destructive. The rich man delights in his wealth, the voluptuary in his debaucheries, the *bon vivant* in his friends and jovial parties; but the truly virtuous man rejoices in the scrupulous discharge of the important duties of life. A new sun appears to shine upon him, and he thinks himself surrounded with a more pure and more brilliant splendor; every object is embellished, and he gaily pursues his career. Our heavenly Father, whose omniscience penetrates into the privacy and honorable obscurity of a Solitude thus employed, will bestow on us a public reward, for having, with its aid, better performed the duties of life, and resisted the temptations to sin. These advantages we derive from pious, constant, and fervent prayer in Solitude, from seclusion from mankind and independence of the world."

'Liberty and leisure, external tranquillity and retirement from society, are, therefore, the best and surest means of arriving at virtue. He, who possesses them, does not merely restrain his passions from breaking out into public and flagrant acts of vice, but he does not even allow his imagination to indulge ideas tending to disturb his repose, on

things which he willingly leaves as they are, because he despises them. Domestic life is not then, as in the gay world, a scene of languor and disgust, the field of battle to base and brutal passions, the abode of vexation, ill-humor, a series of quarrels and torments, and the antitype of hell. Peace and felicity accompany him who renounces every impure source of pleasure, and on that account, is the more capable of diffusing pleasure around him. He, who shuns the contaminated circles of the vicious, who avoids the humiliating sight of stupidity extolled, and villainy triumphant, who sees the inanity of the glory and pretensions to which worldly-minded men aspire, is never discontented in domestic retirement.

All the pleasures of the world lose their charms upon every silent sacrifice laid, in Solitude, upon the altar of virtue. "I had rather shed tears myself than make others shed them;" said a German lady to me one day. She did not appear conscious, that it is scarcely possible to think and to do any thing more generous. Virtue, like this, affords far greater satisfaction to the heart, than all the enjoyments of the world, and the expedients which are there adopted for destroying time, trifling away life, and forgetting eternity. The mind is always happy, when it finds in itself powers, which it was not conscious of possessing. Solitude opens the soul to every noble pleasure, diffuses life and gaiety, tranquillity and satisfaction, where we expected nothing but sorrows, and compensates every loss by a thousand new and peaceful delights.

There is not a villain who does not silently acknowledge that virtue is the foundation of all feli-

city, both in the world and in Solitude. Vice, however, is continually spreading her silken nets, in which she ensnares multitudes of every rank, and of every station. To watch over every seductive desire, not when it is present, but even when it lies dormant in the breast; to overcome base passions by employing the heart in the pursuit of noble pleasures; was, in every age, the greatest conquest the mind could obtain over the world and itself, and inward peace was its constant attendant.

Happy is he, who brings this peace with him into Solitude, which preserves it without alteration. Of what avail would it be, to leave the town and seek Solitude, tranquillity, and repose, if misanthropy lurk within the heart, and it be still enslaved to this baleful passion? Divine content, a serene and tranquil countenance, will, in this state, be as seldom found in flowery meadows, as in the profoundest obscurity of Solitude, or in the gloomy confinement of dreary cells. To purify and to watch over the heart, should, therefore, be our first and last care in Solitude: when this is accomplished we enjoy happiness, and learn the value of tranquillity, leisure, repose, and independence. We should not avoid mankind out of hatred, we may shun their society and yet cherish, in our bosoms, sentiments of universal benevolence.

Part of the felicity, experienced in Solitude, consists in esteeming many things which men despise, and in despising others which they esteem. When, at the conclusion of the war with the pirates, Rome had appointed Pompey to the supreme command of her troops, in the place of Lucullus, and thus resigned the whole empire into the hands of a single

individual, Pompey, upon being invested with that honor, beat his breast and exclaimed: "O gods, you charge me with unceasing labors! How much happier should I have been without name and without glory! Must I be continually in the field and my body be perpetually locked in armor! Can I never escape the persecutions of envy, and enjoy the sweet and tranquil pleasures of rural life, in the company of my wife and children!" Pompey uttered the sentiments of truth in the language of dissimulation, for he had not yet learned sincerely to esteem what men of his character despise, nor did he yet contemn that, which, at this period, all the Romans, fired with the lust of dominion, most highly esteemed. Such was, however, the practice of Manius Curius, the greatest Roman of his age, who had subdued warlike nations, driven Pyrrhus out of Italy, thrice enjoyed the honor of a triumph, and then retired to his cottage in the country, where he cultivated his little garden with his own hands. When the ambassadors of the Samnites came to offer him an immense sum of money, which he refused, they found him sitting by his fire and dressing turnips.

No king or prince was ever so happy as Manius Curius, when dressing his turnips. Princes know too well, that, in many cases, they have no friends; they, therefore, ask advice of many, but confide, perhaps, in none. Every honest subject, every man of sense or feeling, pities the condition of virtuous sovereigns, who can never be perfectly free from fears, cares and torments. Their happiness never equals that of the industrious and contented husbandman, whose pleasures are more permanent,

whose life is more tranquil and serene. The laborer relishes his fare, though homely, and, if his bed be hard, yet he sleeps more soundly than the monarch on his downy pillow.

The pleasures of Solitude may be enjoyed in an equal degree by every description of men, by the meanest as well as by the greatest. The purity of the air, the majestic forests, the variegated tints of the meadows, and the inexhaustible variety with which summer decks the face of nature, charm not only philosophers, kings, and heroes, but delight even the most illiterate spectator. An English writer * has very justly observed: "It is not necessary that he who looks with pleasure on the colors of a flower should study the principles of vegetation, or that the Ptolemaick and Copernican systems should be compared before the light of the sun can gladden, or its warmth invigorate." Novelty is itself a source of gratification; and Milton justly observes, that to him who has been long pent up in cities, no rural object can be presented which will not delight or refresh some of his senses.

Even exiles have frequently felt the advantages and the pleasures of Solitude. Instead of the world, from which they are banished, they create a new world for themselves, in retirement; however exalted their rank, they become accustomed to rational pleasures, and, in order to pass their days in peace and tranquillity, they invent a thousand little enjoyments, which can be found only at a distance from all society, far from compassion or consolation, remote from their family, their country, and friends.

* Dr. Johnson.

To enjoy happiness, exiles, like others, must always attach themselves to some object; must adopt some pursuit capable of inspiring them with distant hopes, or of affording them present pleasure. They, too, aspire to the attainment of felicity; they, too, wish still to live for the sake of happiness!

Maurice, prince of Isenburg, distinguished himself for twenty years, first under Ferdinand, Duke of Brunswick, then under Marechal Broglio, and afterwards in the service of Russia against the Turks. He sacrificed health and repose to ambition and the love of glory. While in the Russian service, he was sent into exile. The horrors of Russian banishment are well known. He however contrived to render even that situation agreeable. The sorrows of banishment at first oppressed his mind, impaired his health, and reduced him to a mere shadow. Lord Bolingbroke's little work on Exile accidentally fell into his hands. He read it several times, "and as I read;" says the prince in the preface to his elegant and nervous translation of this work, "all my griefs vanished."

Lord Bolingbroke's Treatise on Exile is a masterpiece of stoic philosophy * and fine writing. He

* Lord Bolingbroke himself was no very great stoic, excepting in those passages where he wished or was obliged to assume that character. A writer, who knew him intimately, and possessed a particular talent in the art of portrait-painting, the celebrated Lord Chesterfield, says of him: "He was a most mortifying instance of the violence of human passions, and of the weakness of the most exalted human reason. His virtues and his vices, his reason and his passions, did not blend themselves by a gradation of tints, but formed a shining and sudden contrast. Here the dark-

there boldly defies all the past and present adversities of life. "Let us," says he, "set all our past

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est, there the most splendid colors, and both rendered more shining from their proximity. Impetuosity, excess, and almost extravagancy, characterised not only his passions, but even his senses. His youth was distinguished by all the tumult and storm of pleasures, in which he most licentiously triumphed, disdaining all decorum. His fine imagination has often been heated and exhausted with his body, in celebrating and deifying the prostitute of the night; and his convivial joys were pushed to all the extravagancy of frantic Bacchanals. Those passions were interrupted but by a stronger—ambition. The former impaired both his constitution and character, but the latter destroyed both his fortune and reputation.

"He engaged young, and distinguished himself in business; and his penetration was almost intuition. Whatever subject he either speaks or writes upon, he adorns it with the most splendid eloquence; not a studied or labored eloquence, but such a flowing happiness of diction, which (from care perhaps at first) is become so habitual to him, that even his most familiar conversations, if taken down in writing, would bear the press without the least correction, either as to method or style. He has noble and generous sentiments rather than fixed reflected principles of good-nature and friendship; but they are more violent than lasting, and suddenly and often varied to their opposite extremes, with regard even to the same persons. He receives the common attentions of civility as obligations, which he returns with interest; and resents, with passion, the little inadvertencies of human nature, which he repays with interest too. Even a difference of opinion upon a philosophical subject would provoke and prove him no practical philosopher, at least.

"Notwithstanding the dissipation of his youth, and the tumultuous agitation of his middle age, he has an infinite fund of various and almost universal knowledge, which, from the clearest and quickest conception, and happiest memory that ever man was blessed with, he always carries about him. It is his pocket-money, and he never has occa-

and our present afflictions at once before our eyes. Let us resolve to overcome them, instead of flying from them or wearing out the sense of them by long and ignominious patience. Instead of palliating remedies, let us use the incision knife and the caustic, search the wound to the bottom, and work an immediate and radical cure."

The mind is, certainly, strengthened by uninterrupted Solitude, and consequently by long continued exile: and habit supplies this power. But the Solitude of banishment is rendered easy by many pleasing emotions of the heart, which expe-

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sion to draw upon a book for any sum. He excels more particularly in history, as his historical works plainly prove.

"All the internal and external advantages and talents of an orator are undoubtedly his. Figure, voice, elocution, knowledge, and above all, the purest and most florid diction, with the justest metaphors and happiest images, had raised him to the post of secretary at war, at four and twenty years old; an age at which others are hardly thought fit for the smallest employments.

"During his long exile in France he applied himself to study with his characteristical ardor; and there he formed, and chiefly executed the plan of a great philosophical work. The common bounds of human knowledge are too narrow for his warm and aspiring imagination. He must go *extra flammantia mœnia mundi*, and explore the unknown and unknowable regions of metaphysics, which open an unbounded field for the excursions of an ardent imagination; where endless conjectures supply the defect of unattainable knowledge and too often usurp both its name and influence.

"He professes himself a deist; believing in a general Providence, but doubting of, though by no means rejecting (as is commonly supposed) the immortality of the soul and a future state.

"Upon the whole of this extraordinary man, what can we say, but, alas poor human nature!"

riences delights before unknown, when deprived of the enjoyments of more fortunate periods. Brutus found Marcellus, in his exile at Mytilene, surrounded with all the felicity of which human nature is susceptible, and devoted with the same zeal as before to the study of every useful science. Impressed with this sight, he exclaimed, that it was rather he who, by being obliged to return to the world, was condemned to exile, than Marcellus whom he left behind.

Quintus Metellus Numidicus suffered the same fate, a few years before. When the people, under the conduct of Marius, were laying the foundation of that tyranny, which Cæsar afterwards established, Metellus alone, amidst the terrified senate, and surrounded by an enraged populace, refused to take the oath imposed by the pernicious laws of the tribune Saturninus. His fortitude was his crime, and exile the punishment, to which he was condemned by the clamors of a lawless and ungovernable mob. The most virtuous of the citizens had taken arms in his defence, determined to perish rather than suffer their country to be deprived of his talents and integrity; but this generous Roman, having found persuasion unavailing, considered resistance as incompatible with the duty he owed to the laws. He judged of the phrenzy of the Roman republic, as Plato once did of the madness of the Athenians. "My fellow-citizens will recal me," said Metellus, "if they should grow better; if not, no situation can be more improper for me than Rome." He therefore went cheerfully into exile, with a full conviction of its advantages for a heart that could find repose only on distant shores, and

which, had he remained at Rome, would have been continually tortured by the sight of a sickly state and an expiring republic.

Rutilius withdrew from the same corrupted city, feeling equal contempt for the sentiments and manners of his age. He had relieved Asia from the extortion of the collectors of taxes. His conduct irritated the equestrian order, and, from motives equally dishonorable, the party of Marius was exasperated against him. The most innocent man in the city was accused of corruption, and prosecuted by the vilest, by the infamous Apicius. The authors of this false accusation sat as judges, and pronounced against him the most unjust sentence. Rutilius scarcely condescended to defend himself, but sought an asylum in the east, where his virtues, which degenerate Rome could not endure, obtained him the highest respect. He left his country with far greater pleasure, than he felt upon the expiration of the term of his exile; for, when recalled, he not only refused to return, but fled to a still greater distance.

To these examples of happy and contented exiles, Cicero is the well-known exception. He possessed all the treasures of the soul, all the delicate sentiments necessary for deriving advantage from Solitude, but had not sufficient energy to support the adversity of banishment. Cicero, the savior of his country, feared, in prosperity, neither the menaces of a desperate party, nor the daggers of assassins: but his mind sank beneath the pressure of misfortune. He had before complained of the weakness of his constitution; but, in his exile, it is evident that he became hypochondriac. In this state,

the soul, incapable of every exertion, loses all the energy that stimulates to bold resolutions and to acts of courage. Cicero and his dejection were a dishonor to Solitude and to exile. Uncertain whither to go, or how to act, timid as a woman and froward as a child, he lamented the loss of his rank, his wealth, and his brilliant popularity. His eloquence only served to pourtray his shame in more glowing colors. He wept over the ruins of his house which Clodius had destroyed, and was afflicted at his separation from Terentia whom he soon afterwards divorced. The man whose mind is oppressed by melancholy, sometimes bitterly bewails the loss of objects from the possession of which he received no pleasure. Cicero's friends and enemies imagined that he had lost his senses. Cæsar, with sincere satisfaction, beheld the man who had refused to be his colleague, writhing beneath the scourge of a Clodius. Pompey hoped that his ingratitude would be forgotten, in the contempt to which the friend, whom he had forsaken, exposed himself. Even Atticus, whose great talents were usury and elegance, who kept well with all parties, and sided with none, blushed for Cicero, judged him too meanly attached to his former fortune, and reproached him in the style of a Cato. Cicero enjoyed none of the advantages of Solitude, because weak and melancholy sentiments filled him only with dispiriting ideas, and represented the worst side of every object. Cicero, however, died nobly, and not like a dejected coward. "Approach, old soldier," cried he, from his litter, to Popilius Lænas, his client and his murderer, "and if you have the courage, take my life."

Happiness to be enjoyed in Solitude in old age.

A man suffering under the misfortune of exile cannot expect his days to pass agreeably in rural pleasures and philosophic repose, if he has not performed those duties he owed to the world, and given to posterity the bright example of a man, as great in misfortune as in the most brilliant period of prosperity.

Solitude affords the promise of great felicity to every man upon the approach of old age and in the decline of life. The life of man is a short journey, and his old age a fleeting day. In Solitude we are enabled to forget the storms we have encountered. I will bear you till your old age, and till ye become grey; I will do it; I will raise up and support you, saith the Lord. Solitude in old age is, therefore, one of the most agreeable situations, if we consider it as a period of repose, as the interval between the affairs of the world and death, as the port whence we can quietly look back upon all the storms of fate, and review the secret history of our sentiments and affections.

Mankind are generally desirous of bringing to a conclusion every other concern, before they direct their attention to themselves. In the same manner, we frequently first wander through foreign countries, before we enquire what is worthy of notice in our native land. But this is not the conduct of the prudent man; whether in the ardent period of youth, or in the decline of age, Solitude and self-examination are the beginning and the end of wisdom. Should Solitude even produce melancholy ideas in youth and in maturer years, yet in old age it often banishes every depression.

Our entrance into life is checkered with wishes,

hopes and disappointments ; our succeeding years are the season of melancholy ; but nothing shakes or surprises him who has acquired experience. The man who is exempt from the care of procuring his daily bread, and was early acquainted with the deceitful practices of the world, complains not that his zeal and services have been rewarded with ingratitude. Give him but tranquillity and he desires no more. Every thing else is of little value in his eyes, if he entered early into the examination of his own heart, began early to be wise, and of course formed at an early period, a just opinion of the world and of mankind.

A celebrated German has, I think, very justly observed, that there are political as well as religious Carthusians; and that both, so far from being the worst, are frequently the best and most pious of men. "In the secret recesses of the forest," says this writer, you meet the peaceful sage, the tranquil observer, the friend of truth and of his country, equally uninfected with superstition and impiety. His wisdom delights mankind; they admire the extent of his knowledge, and are warmed by his love of truth, and his affection towards his fellow-creatures. They are anxious to obtain his confidence and his friendship; they are as much astonished at the rectitude of his conduct, and the modesty of his conversation, as at the obscurity of his name and his mode of existence. They endeavor to draw this sage from his cottage to the palace, but at length they perceive inscribed with sacred fire, on his forehead: *Odi profanum vulgus et arceo.* Instead of seducing him, they become his proselytes."

Alas! that political Carthusian is no more, whom I once saw in Wetteravia, and in whose countenance I beheld with filial love and reverence, this wisdom and tranquillity expressed in living characters. A greater character did not perhaps, at that time, exist in any court; I never met with a more acute observer of men and their actions, one who formed such a just opinion of the world and the principal performers on its theatre, being personally acquainted with some of the greatest monarchs of Europe. I never found a mind more free, open, candid, energetic and mild; an eye of greater discernment and penetration; in short, a man, in whose company I could have lived with higher pleasure, or died with greater comfort. His mansion was simple and modest; his garden unadorned by art, and his table frugal. I experienced ineffable delight at this sequestered retreat in Wetteravia, the residence of the virtuous Baron von Schrautenbach.

No youthful writer ever possessed more energy and fire, none ever employed his Solitude better than Rousseau in his declining years. It was in his old age that he wrote the greater part and the best of his works. Between his fiftieth and sixtieth year Rousseau raised himself to the rank of one of the first writers of his age. At a still more advanced period of life, when approaching towards the end of his career, the poor philosopher, indeed, in vain sought tranquillity of heart in Solitude. Rousseau had been too frequently exposed to the fury of the enemies of truth; he had experienced persecutions too severe and unremitted. Before he acquired celebrity, he had suffered long and severe illness, part-

ly from neglecting to take care of his health, and partly from the weakness of his constitution. He had been many years tormented by physicians and racked with the stone, and afterwards became an author. In the latter years of his life the effects of his melancholy and vexation became more apparent than ever. He sank beneath them, and sometimes talked wildly when he was ill. "All that Rousseau wrote during his old age was nonsense," said one of our refined female critics. "Yes," replied her more sensible fair friend, "but his nonsense is so agreeable, that we sometimes like to talk nonsense with him."

Old age appears the most proper season for meditation. The ardent fire of youth is damped, the noon-tide heat of life is past, and the evening arrives accompanied with soft tranquillity and refreshing quietude. It may therefore be useful to devote some time to meditation, before our departure from the world, if, after all the vicissitudes we have, perhaps, experienced, we can procure an interval of repose. The thought alone of this happy repose is like the genial warmth of the vernal sun after a long and dreary winter. "Let old age enjoy repose," exclaims the critic, "but, at that period of life, a man ought not to write. The fire of fancy is extinguished, the powers of the imagination are fled, the colors are faded." "True," replied the hoary author; "but what I write affords me pleasure. I still love to indulge my sensations; I read, I write, I reflect; these occupations are still, as in my youth, the delight of my life; besides, in old age we are desirous to recover, in tran-

quil employment, what we daily lost in the world amidst busy inquietude."

Petrarch scarcely perceived the approaches of old age. He knew how to render his Solitude agreeable by activity, and his years passed away in sweet and tranquil enjoyment. From a small villa in the neighborhood of a Carthusian convent, twelve miles from Milan, he wrote to his friend Settimo, with a *naiveté* unknown to modern manners: "Like a weary traveller, I double my pace the nearer I approach the end of my journey. I read and write night and day; the one affords me recreation after the other. These constitute the whole of my occupations and my pleasures. I watch and labor, amuse and exert myself; my ardor increases in proportion to the difficulties I encounter. Novelty excites and obstacles stimulate me; the labor is certain, but the success uncertain. My eyes are dimmed with watching and my hand tired of holding the pen. My wish is, that posterity may know me. If I should not succeed in this wish, yet the age in which I live, or, at least, my friends know me, and that is sufficient. My health is so good, my constitution so strong, my temperament so warm, that neither the maturity of age, more serious occupations, continence, nor the harshest usage can subdue the rebellious enemy, which I am incessantly obliged to attack. I rely upon Providence, without whose assistance I should become its victim, as it has frequently happened before. I am often obliged, at the end of the winter, to take up arms against my flesh, and even at the present mo-

Fear of contempt represses the exertions of genius in old age.

ment I am fighting for my liberty against this enemy."*

The most obscure and retired life in old age is not discreditable to him, who has long been buffeted by the tempests of the world, and wishes to end his days in tranquil Solitude. Those, indeed, who are capable of useful exertions appear reprehensible, if they confine to their own bosoms the benefits derived from their leisure. However, in Germany particularly, the freedom and licentiousness of the age abate the ardent fire of many a superior genius in the later period of life; so that, instead of doing honor to their country, they spend their time in ignoble inactivity with the parson or lawyer of the village, chusing rather to be forgotten by the world than to incur its contempt.

But men of more energetic minds and more manly sentiments, under similar circumstances and even in advanced age, disregarding the obloquy of their contemporaries and withdrawing from the

* Squarzafichi, one of the best biographers of this celebrated man, relates, that Petrarch about this period became acquainted with a young lady of the family of Beccaria, who resided in the vicinity of his villa, and that Petrarch's daughter, Francisca, was the fruit of this connection: This writer must, however, have been led into a very gross error, as Francisca herself about seven years afterwards became a mother. During the summer in which the above letter was written, Petrarch spent every moment that was not devoted to study either in the Carthusian convent or the church belonging to it; so says the best historian of Petrarch's life, the Abbé de Sade. Yet Petrarch's complaints of this enemy justify the suspicion that at this period his visits to the fair Beccaria were, at least, as frequent as to the neighboring monastery.

world, have shone with greater lustre in their retirement than in the period of youth. "It is in Solitude, in exile, on the bed of death," says Pope, "that the noblest characters of antiquity shone with the greatest splendor; it was then that they performed the greatest services; for then they communicated their knowledge to mankind."

This observation is applicable to Rousseau. "It is of some service," says he, "to afford mankind an example of the life they ought all to lead. It is at least useful when the strength and health, necessary for laborious exertions, are fled, boldly to address them in the voice of truth. It is useful to warn men of the folly of opinions which render them miserable." "I should be much less serviceable to my countrymen," continues Rousseau, "if I lived among them, than it is possible I may be in my retirement. Of what consequence is it where I live if I exert myself in my proper sphere?"

But a young lady of Germany entertained a different opinion. "Rousseau," said she, "is a seducer of the youthful mind; and it was with this view the hoary sinner in his Confessions discovered the failings, the vicious inclinations, and the worst side of his heart. Such a work, written by a man of the most virtuous disposition, would be offensive; but Rousseau, in whom vice was so predominant, as his story of the stolen ribband evinces, possessed a heart of the blackest dye! A thousand passages in that work shew that his pen was guided by vanity alone; and a thousand others as clearly prove that Rousseau had no regard for truth. The whole history of his youth is a fiction, for who could recollect circumstances so insignificant that occurred

during the years of infancy? And were it even possible, yet there is nothing that Rousseau says on the subject which bears the stamp of truth; and all that we learn from the whole work is, that Madame de Warens was the original from which Rousseau copied his Julia. The Confessions of Rousseau contain, upon the whole, many fine words with few ideas. Rousseau during his whole life rejected every opportunity of advancing himself and of being serviceable to the world. If he had engaged in any kind of trade, instead of publishing his dangerous writings, he would have been a much more useful member of society."

This incomparable criticism on Rousseau is worthy of being preserved, because I believe it to be the only one of the kind. The Confessions of Rousseau are certainly improper for the eye of youth; but I consider them as one of the most remarkable and philosophic works of the age. Their inimitable style and richness of coloring are their smallest merit. The remotest posterity will read the Confessions of Rousseau without asking how old the author was, when he gave to the age in which he lived this last instance of his sincerity.

The days of an old man, even at the most advanced period of life, are accompanied with delight and comfort, when in his retirement he recollects the virtuous actions he has performed, and the reward which, even in the present life, invariably attends them. No man is dejected by the retrospective survey of a virtuous and honorable life. Great minds never shudder at the sight of the tomb. The Empress Maria Theresa ordered her tomb to be constructed, and frequently stopped near this awe-

inspiring monument, the sight of which so few are able to endure, and pointed it out to her children with the question: "Can we be proud, when we here see what in a few years will be the receptacle of emperors?"

There are few, indeed, who think with so much sublimity. Every one, however, may withdraw from the world, learn to appreciate life according to its just value, and in his remaining moments cultivate and extend the knowledge of God and virtue, which he has already acquired. In the stedfast expectation of joys beyond the grave, he will regard death as the serene sun-set of a well-spent life.

The pure enjoyments of the heart in Solitude frequently produce religious sentiments and ideas, which in their turn augment the pleasures of retirement. A life of simplicity, innocence and tranquillity qualifies the heart to raise itself towards God; the aspect of all nature inspires the mind with religious sentiments, and the most sublime effect of religion is tranquillity.

When the heart possesses true religion, the world loses its importance, and the mind is less oppressed by the burthen of mortality and misery. You live in ever verdant pastures and see around you cooling springs, near which the shepherd of Israel feeds his flocks. The tumults of the world appear like the rolling of thunder afar off; or like the roar of distant waters, whose course you perceive, or whose waves break against the lofty rock upon which you stand.

When Addison was given over by his physician, and perceived that his end was approaching, he sent for a relation, a young man of exquisite sensibility,

Craig del — Edwards scp^t

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and who was deeply afflicted at the loss with which he was threatened. He arrived, but Addison, whose life quivered like the glimmer of an expiring taper, was silent. After a decent pause, the youth at length said: "My dear Sir, you desired to see me; signify your commands; I will obey them with religious punctuality." Addison, pressing his hand with fervor, replied in a low voice: "See with what tranquillity a Christian can die!"*

Such is the consolation and tranquillity which religion affords, and such the peace of mind which a life of simplicity and innocence promotes more than any other. Even when it is not altogether in our power to remove all the obstacles to this inward peace, and to snatch the victory from the world on every occasion, yet the idea of sacrificing every thing to God is deeply impressed upon the mind, and to a warm and virtuous heart is extremely natural. Why are we so often discontented and miserable; why do we so frequently complain of the want of enjoyment and happiness, but because we suffer ourselves to be deceived by false appearances, because sensuality so often predominates over reason, because we so frequently prefer illusory pleasures and transient enjoyments to the most essential blessings and permanent felicity; in a word, because we are insensible to the precepts of religion!

To devote therefore, many of the hours spent in

* The person above alluded to, was the Earl of Warwick, a young man of debauched life, and dissolute manners, whose mother Addison had married. Whether any permanent impression was made on his mind, by the pathetic address of the expiring philosopher, we are not informed; but the earl did not long survive him. T.

Solitude to religion, and the others to innocent recreations, is not only proper, but it is our duty. The piety of the solitary man must not, however, degenerate into fanaticism: nor should he, rejecting the dictates of human reason, and resigning himself to the reveries of a heated imagination, mistake the slightest emotions for the most sacred impulses. Neither does Religion require her votary to appear with a look of constant gloom and dejection, nor prohibit the enjoyment of innocent pleasures. His heart should be serene and cheerful, for a contented mind is the natural effect of wisdom and virtue; and in such content consists the true dignity of reason, and a bold, manly spirit of religion. How often, alas! has it been in vain asserted that the christian religion would produce more powerful effects, would diffuse more virtue and happiness in the world, would lead more men to heaven, if abridged of all ridiculous systems, of all useless speculative doctrines; and that in the same proportion, those sentiments would be strengthened which possess a real influence over the minds and actions of mankind.

But he who in Solitude is sensible of the character he supports in the world, of that which he may acquire in retirement, and of that which he ought to attain, enjoys content of mind. If he is seriously resolved to think like a philosopher and to live like a Christian, he will renounce those empty pleasures and pernicious enjoyments, which prevent the soul from raising itself towards God, banish every sober reflection and enervate the mind. When disgusted with the pleasures of the world, with the empty, frivolous chimeras of dissipation, vanity and folly,

withdraw therefore as often as you can, to examine your own heart, to elevate your mind to more virtuous resolutions, and to resign yourself more completely and for a longer time to the emotions of your heart. But if you still continue to sail upon that dangerous sea, learn that, with prudence, you may avoid the rocks and shoals; that, when buffeted by the tempests of life, you may by tranquil resolution escape impending destruction, and that you ought to feel less joy when you steer with a fair wind and favorable sky, than when you overcome the greatest dangers.

To a man who has been accustomed to collect his thoughts in silence, the hours which he dedicates to God in retirement are the happiest portion of his life. Every time we raise our hearts towards God in Solitude, we are excited to a more strict and uninterrupted observation of ourselves. Every removal from happiness becomes more intolerable, and we experience increased pleasure in total seclusion from the bustle of the world. By degrees we acquire a more intimate knowledge of ourselves, we are enabled to scrutinize our characters with greater severity; we feel the necessity of correcting our mode of thinking and of reforming our conduct, and maturely reflect on the end and object of our lives. If we ourselves know what renders our actions acceptable in the sight of God, it is immaterial what construction men put upon them. But every good work or action admits of so many secondary views which may not be pleasing to God, that their merit must consequently depend wholly upon the disposition of the heart. Every good action, without doubt, conveys tranquillity to the heart; but is

this tranquillity always genuine? Is it not derived from the gratification of worldly views, from a temporary enthusiasm or self love, rather than from the exercise of brotherly affection? We are certainly enabled to examine our thoughts, actions and conduct much better, if we employ for that purpose the hours of tranquil retirement, and in order to discuss these important truths, select those solitary moments when we are alone before God.

It is thus that in Solitude we renounce the intercourse with mankind, to look back upon our past life, to examine our conduct, to prepare ourselves for each succeeding day, and to render an account each evening of that which we have passed. Thus the wounds inflicted by the world are healed. These intervals of religious repose strengthen every virtuous resolution, soothe the heart, and point out the safest passage between the tremendous rocks with which life is surrounded. Thus we are never less alone than when no human being is near us, because then we are in the presence of him, whose favor is of more importance, than the universal applause of mankind.

Solitude constantly conducts us from weakness to strength, from seduction to resistance, from the tyranny of visible objects to the consideration of those which are invisible, from the present to the future. Though men do not always retire into Solitude to commune with God, yet they willingly quit the haunts of dissipation and folly, for the calm, sequestered retreat, where they can resign themselves to refined pleasures, to the enjoyments of the mind. In every peaceful moment of our lives we however approach nearer to the presence of him,

whom to please it is of such importance, and who watches by our lamp even at the hour of midnight.

The apostles of society, indeed, pretend that there are matters of high importance to be transacted in the world; this, however, will never be the case till each, in his station, performs more than his duty requires; but, alas! we all do less than our duty, and leave the affairs of the world to go on as they may. Energy for great actions, elevation of character, stability and constancy in virtue, are no where so easily acquired as in Solitude, and even there, by nothing so efficaciously as religion. Religion disengages the heart from vain desires, renders it tranquil in misfortune, humble before God, bold before men, and teaches it to rely confidently on Providence. Solitude and religion refine all our moral sentiments, as long as they remain untinctured with fanaticism; and at the conclusion of a life devoted to the constant improvement and refinement of these sentiments, every hour consecrated in silence to God, every fervent supplication addressed to him, procures an eternal reward.

All low desires vanish, if we sometimes have the courage to think, that the state of durable satisfaction and constant content of mind, at which we have already arrived, probably bears some analogy to the joys of eternity. The perfect liberty to be and to do what we please, because in heaven, that region of love and friendship, we cannot even entertain an improper wish; a life of innocence; the end of all our imperfect conceptions of love; the justification of all the ways of Providence; the implicit confidence in God; the everlasting communion with those whom our souls loved on earth; such at least

are the wishes and hopes in which, amidst silent meditation, we may, I trust, even in this life, be permitted to indulge, and for the fulfilment of which, many besides myself would willingly resign every prospect of present happiness, which is more or less clouded by sorrow and affliction.

But these and all other wishes and hopes, which at present shed a glimmering light and impart a feeble warmth, must remain visions and dreams of the mind, till eternity ceases to be obscured by the tomb, by clouds and darkness; till the veil shall be removed and till the Almighty shall reveal things which no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard, and which have never entered into the heart of man. For with perfect conviction and sincere submission I acknowledge, that our conceptions of eternity are as imperfect, as the idea formed by the blind man of the color of purple, which he compared to the sound of a trumpet.*

With due submission I acknowledge, that in this world filled with constraints and confusion, disquie-

* Mankind in general fondly hope to enjoy in eternity what flatters their present tastes, inclinations, desires and passions. I therefore concur entirely in the opinion of the celebrated German philosopher M. Garve, that those who pretend to humility cannot be really humble in heart while they hope that God will reward them in eternity with honor and dominion. Thus a young and very handsome German lady once said: she hoped in eternity to wear a habit of fine silver tissue, with a zone composed of the feathers of the humming bird and to walk in heaven upon a carpet of rose leaves spread upon æther. Thus, in a large company of married ladies of high rank, the question being once proposed, whether marriages would continue to all eternity, they unanimously exclaimed: "God forbid!"

tude and embarrassment, liberty, leisure and repose are inestimable blessings; that we sigh for them as the mariner sighs at sea for land, and fancies himself in heaven when he discovers it. But those who are strangers to every sorrow, are incapable of feeling the value of those enjoyments; they resemble the inhabitant of the *terra firma* who can form no conception of the navigator's feelings. For myself, I know not any idea so consolatory as the notion, that eternity promises uninterrupted repose, unaccompanied with sensual gratification; though it is impossible to form any conception of the nature of an enjoyment that confers eternal happiness. An eternity of repose is the highest idea of felicity that my soul is capable of conceiving; for I know of no earthly happiness equal to peace of mind. Since, therefore, internal and external tranquillity is, even in this life, an incontestible commencement of happiness, it may be useful to believe, that in a rational and moderate seclusion from the tumults of men, we may acquire those qualities of the soul, which are the elements of our happiness in a future state.

I here conclude my considerations on the advantages of Solitude upon the heart. May they give greater currency to a few useful truths and sentiments, and contribute in some degree to diffuse the enjoyment of a species of happiness which is so much within our reach! More than this I cannot desire. For the rest, let each live as he pleases, practice virtue according to his inclination, and procure every pleasure, of which he is convinced, that both here and in eternity it will have the approbation of God and of his own conscience.

CHAP. VIII.

INCLINATION TO SOLITUDE,

IN THE EARLY PERIODS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND IN WARM CLIMATES IN GENERAL.

BENEATH the burning skies, and in the dreary deserts of Africa and Asia, man is either more powerfully impelled to solitary retirement by melancholy, or by a stronger propensity to indolence and repose, than in countries where the imagination is less heated and the physical powers less relaxed.

As early as the times of the Jewish monarchy, small republics were formed of individuals who had withdrawn from society, in imitation of Elijah and Elisha, the children of the prophets, who built themselves huts on the shores of Jordan, where they dwelt remote from the crowded city, subsisting upon the spontaneous productions of the earth.

The first chapters of every history, that is not of divine origin, must be occupied either by fable or conjecture. After the first destruction of the Temple, small parties of Jews are supposed to have taken refuge in solitary places, and from the impossibility of performing public worship, to have passed their lives in contemplation. In the sequel, these Jews probably believed, according to a maxim previously adopted in Egypt, that tranquillity of mind and

heart was a pure and pleasing sacrifice to the Almighty without altars or temples. Many, probably even in the more flourishing periods of the Jewish nation, embraced this doctrine, and formed a sect combining the Pythagorean principles with the Mosaic law. It is certain at least, that the Esseneans were a Jewish sect devoted to Solitude and contemplation, who had borrowed many of their tenets from the heathen philosophers, particularly the Pythagoreans, and gradually extended themselves through Egypt, Syria and Palestine.

The Esseneans were not unanimous in their doctrines and opinions. They, however all agreed, that the most rational worship of the deity consisted in repose and contemplation, that man obtains the favour of the Almighty by the practice of rigid virtue, for which he must prepare himself by abstinence and other mortifications. One sect of the Esseneans was called *Theoretici;* these lived in seclusion and in continual contemplation. Another sect was denominated *Practici;* these lived in social intercourse with each other. Some of the latter were not averse from matrimony; yet most of them remained single, fearful that their wives might prove inconstant and that thus domestic dissensions might arise. The most rigid but least numerous class of the Esseneans retired into the deserts of Egypt, and there lived in silent austerity, that they might serve the Almighty with all the faculties of their mind. On the contrary, those who resided in Judea and Palestine, and whose number amounted to four thousand, submitted in every respect to the Jewish ceremonies.

The Esseneans possessed no influence over the Jewish church or constitution. On this account, probably, they were not mentioned by our Saviour; though by their doctrines, partly of their own invention and partly borrowed from the heathen philosophers, they seduced the imaginations of weak-minded men to pursue a path, which, instead of conducting them to heaven, led them farther and farther from it.

The Therapeutæ, like the Esseneans, were a Jewish sect which arose in Egypt. Like them too, after their return to the country of Judea, during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, they served God only in their hearts. In process of time they multiplied in other countries, particularly in Egypt near the city of Alexandria. Their doctrines and their conduct were directed by notions of a more elevated and more enthusiastic tendency, and which were consequently the more agreeable in those regions: for they had less connection with the Mosaic law and the dictates of reason. Filled with supernatural inspiration and superstitious fanaticism, they forsook their wives, their children and their property, and lived in sequestered cells, principally on the celebrated mountains of Nitria, afterwards the residence of so many christian enthusiasts. There, besides their rigid exercises of piety and devotion, they studied metaphysics, astronomy and poetry.

The christian religion was brought to Egypt by the evangelist Mark. He sowed the seed of the gospel at Alexandria and it produced Egyptian fruit. The great end of the divine religion of Jesus

was to render men useful members of society; the constant practice of social virtue is, according to his doctrine, the mean of attaining the highest degree of moral perfection. But this did not appear sufficient in the eyes of the Egyptian christians. Leaving the doctrines of Christ far behind, they determined to surpass even the sublimest conceptions of moral purity.

Regardless of all the duties they owed to society, the institutions of the creator were violated and his gifts ungratefully despised. From the whole tendency of their doctrines, and from the accounts of all the historians of those ages, it appears, that the Egyptian christians imagined themselves wiser than the divine founder of their religion.

These enthusiasts were denominated Ascetics, that is such who, by exercise and effort, endeavour to attain the highest degree of virtue and perfection. The first christians likewise, were, doubtless, Ascetics, if we apply that term to the rational practice of piety and devotion. In the time of the apostles no distinction of rank, no particular species of food were considered obstacles to salvation; for the christian religion teaches mankind to enjoy the pleasure of life, without abusing them, and thus rendering themselves unfit for the service of the Almighty.

The Egyptian Ascetics, on the contrary, were extravagant enthusiasts, who were continually introducing well-intentioned but inconsiderate innovations. Some of them assumed the philosophic habit; many considered it highly meritorious to confine themselves entirely to the spiritual communication with their wives, and all submitted to the severest mortifications, that they might be the less

exposed to the seductions of pleasure. They exercised themselves in prayer, which is the duty of every christian; but amidst fasting, watching and lamentation, they tormented their bodies, and at length became so entirely enslaved to superstition and fanaticism, that they completely subverted the religion of Christ.

The superstition of the Platonic philosophy was soon incorporated with the doctrines of christianity. "The life of the wise man, according to the precepts of that celebrated sage, should be a constant endeavour to die, or to set at liberty the immortal spirit from the frail tenement which it inhabits. The soul can only be raised to the divinity and its expiring energies revived by the mortification of the senses, by the extinction of the passions, by the incessant search and contemplation of eternal truth. The truly wise man from his early infancy disregards public honors and emoluments; ignorant of what is passing around him he aspires not to dignity and wealth; he is never seen at the festive board or in the jovial circle. He renounces the attainments of study, not out of vanity, or to make a boast of his ignorance, but he considers them trifles so insignificant as not to merit a moment's attention. His body alone dwells among his fellow-citizens, his spirit hovers about continually, penetrates beneath the earth or soars aloft in the ethereal regions. He despises the distinctions of rank, the influence conferred by extensive possessions, the pride of pedigree, immense treasures augmented by the parsimony of each succeeding possessor, as the playthings of children, from which a great mind can derive no pleasure. He ridicules the arts and

sciences as unprofitable nonsense, excepting those which teach him how to escape as quickly as possible from the earthly, impure habitation of mortality, to a better world, to everlasting felicity."

Captivated by this specious language of enthusiasm, the Egyptian Ascetics were not contented to resemble the earliest christians, who had made the Saviour of the world the model of their perfection. For them such a religion was not sufficiently sublime. "All the Platonists," says a profound enquirer into the opinions of those ages, "who lived at the conclusion of the second, but more particularly those of the third century, adopted these principles of Plato themselves, and thus not only became useless members of society, but even traitors to its interests by seducing youth. They chose a mode of life, by which those who might have been the instructors and benefactors of the age in which they lived, were degraded into unprofitable, philosophical monks."

These extravagant notions and fanatical doctrines were engrafted in Egypt upon the christian religion, in which they made a complete revolution. Their votaries aspired, by means of contemplation, abstinence, solitude and mortifications, to detach their souls from their mortal parts and to associate them more closely, even during the present life, with the Father of Spirits. Raised above every earthly object, purified from every worldly affection, they hoped to lose themselves in the Being of Beings. Thus two different degrees of piety and virtue existed in Egypt. The common christian employed himself in labor; the christian of the more exalted class indulged in profound repose. Mysticism,

therefore, was the offspring of all this extravagance, misconception of the scriptures, the fanatic principles of the Platonic philosophy and likewise of the burning climate, where man knows no higher enjoyment than the refreshing shade and indolent repose.

Many of the Ascetics at first continued to reside in their own houses and lived in social intercourse with mankind; but, at the conclusion of the second and the beginning of the third century, they withdrew from the towns to retired situations, upon which they received the name of *monks* or solitary persons. These, forming select communities, solemnly chose a superior or father, under the guidance of whose admonitions and example they hoped to attain the object of their exertions. Many, however, fearful lest the sight of their brethren, their conversation, their joint labors and prayers might divert their minds, and disturb the sublime mystic repose which they sought to attain, retired into the deserts, where they took possession of the rude habitations of savage beasts, condemning themselves to an existence painful, comfortless and dismal. The former were called Cenobites and the latter Anachorets or hermits.

Thus in the second and third century mysticism laid the foundation of all monastic institutions, and the original object of a monastic life was what millions of monks have never heard or conceived. Pythagoras, Plato and Philo,* together with the

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* Mosheim, whose labors have elucidated the history of this period, has shewn that the whole system of mysticism is to be found in the writings of the platonic Jew, Philo.

burning sun and arid climate of Egypt produced mysticism, the offspring of which was monachism.

Many christians, likewise, took refuge in the deserts to escape the persecutions of the Roman emperors, and a considerable number of them never returned. Of those who fled thither to avoid the persecution of Decius, one of the most celebrated was Paul, the first christian hermit, a native of Thebes.

Upon the commencement of the persecution of the christians in Egypt, this youth, sprung from a noble family, possessing the gifts of fortune and a mind adorned with the attainments of literature, endeavoured to conceal himself in a sequestered and rural situation; but, fearful of being discovered by his enemies, he fled into the remote recesses of some desert mountains. Proceeding through a long and dreary tract he at length arrived at a hill, at the foot of which he discovered a large cave, whose mouth was closed up with a stone. He entered; the aperture conducted to a spacious apartment, with an opening at the top, concealed by the wide-spreading branches of an aged palm-tree; the waters of a limpid spring traversed the cave, and upon leaving it, were again lost in the earth. In the same mountain he found several other places, which had once been inhabited, and contained various instruments for coining; some coiners having established themselves there during the reign of Cleopatra.

In this spot Paul immediately resolved to fix his abode. The palm-tree furnished him with food and clothing; the spring supplied him with drink.

Here he lived, occupied in prayer and other exercises of devotion, till he was one hundred and thirteen years old, about the year 340. At this period he became acquainted with Anthony, who, for many years, had led a similar life in another part of the Egyptian deserts, and who now came, as it proved, to bury the aged hermit, as he very soon afterwards expired.

Paul was, therefore, the first christian distinguished by the name of Hermit, who rose a degree higher than the common Ascetics, renouncing, in his dreary Solitude, all intercourse with mankind, and never quitting his cave till the time of his death. St. Jerome calls him the founder of the hermit's life, but it was more properly only an extension of the manners and principles of the Ascetics.

The great St. Anthony is the next in order of the ancient hermits. His parents were Egyptian peasants, and some authors assert, that he could read and write, which, however, is denied by others. In his childhood he would not associate with other boys, but indulged in misanthropic reserve. He had scarcely lost his parents, when this melancholy youth, divided his patrimony, consisting of one hundred and fifty acres of land, among the inhabitants of his native village, sold his household furniture, distributed the produce among the poor, and, forsaking his habitation, he first retired to a solitary spot in the vicinity, and afterwards wandering from one hermit to another, he imbibed the principles of that exalted virtue, of which, in the sequel, he exhibited such a bright example to his contemporaries and to posterity.

The flame of impure desire was early kindled by

the evil spirit in the bosom of this celebrated saint; Anthony endeavored to extinguish it, by confining himself to bread and water, and sleeping upon a hard and uncomfortable couch. To ensure his victory over the world and his sinful inclinations, he concealed himself in a grave, at a considerable distance from his native village. This singular abode seems to have encreased the melancholy and misanthropy of his disposition, and I need only transcribe the account of his most circumspect biographer, to shew how much his intellects were deranged by these his first ascetic extravagances. In his grave, he was engaged in continual contests with the devil, as he imagined, and, amidst all his anguish and inquietude, his limbs were so dreadfully distorted in his confined habitation, that he was removed from his grave for dead, to the church of the next village; in all probability he was epileptic. As soon, however, as he came to himself in the church, he requested, notwithstanding his infirmity, to be carried back to his former abode. The devil immediately recommenced his persecutions; that is, he was again attacked by his malady, and it was a considerable time before he recovered from its effects.

Anthony now resolved to remove entirely into the desert, and endeavored to persuade an aged Ascetic to accompany him; a proposal, at that time so novel, the latter rejected. Anthony, therefore, in his thirty-fifth year, repaired alone to the desert. Crossing the Nile, he proceeded to the mountains, and finding an ancient castle, he there resided twenty years.

In this abode his food consisted of stale bread,

that was brought to him every half year, and water, which he found within the walls of his castle. He never opened his door, either to those who brought his bread, or to such as came to visit him. But these people were frequently filled with terror and dismay by the strangest noises, and the most frightful shrieks. They imagined that Anthony was contending with the devil, but, in reality, they only heard how frantic he sometimes was or pretended to be. The concourse of visitors, beneath the sacred walls of this enchanted castle, became so great, that, at length, Anthony, after twenty years confinement, yielding to the pressing intreaties of his friends, say his historians, but, more probably, weary of such a life, and for the benefit of his health, abandoned his retreat.

His melancholy frenzy now subsided; he became sociable, and turning his attention to concerns of importance, he collected a great number of hermits, living in solitary retirement, and accustomed them to a life of social intercourse. Anthony was now endowed with the miraculous power of healing the diseases both of soul and body, and persuaded great numbers of men to retire into Solitude, who, repairing to the mountains, constructed habitations, which received the name of monasteries. Over all these monasteries, Anthony exercised the superintendence. As the inclination for Solitude gradually increased, the deserts became more and more peopled with monks. To this the persecutions which still continued, probably contributed considerably; but even when the church again enjoyed tranquillity, great numbers still fled from the world, and sought a refuge in these lonely

retreats. The place, where Anthony collected the first monks around him, was called Phaium, and one of his earliest, most celebrated, and most active disciples, was St Hilarion.

The youthful Hilarion, while a student at Alexandria, came, out of curiosity, to visit St. Anthony, and returned home in the monastic habit. But, at this period, the saint's melancholy was so completely dissipated, that he was too fond of society and conversation; which displeased the rigid Hilarion. He could not endure the tumultuous assemblage of persons, who flocked around this Gassner* of that age, entreating him to drive out devils, by which they were never possessed. Hilarion, therefore, returned to his native place to live in retirement, and remote from the disquietude of such a noisy scene. Anthony, at his departure, presented

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* Gassner was a German priest, who, a few years since, pretended to cure a great number of diseases, in Swabia and Bavaria, by magic. That the devil should be made an instrument, at the present day, in the cure of diseases, will scarcely be credited; but, it is still more singular, that Gassner, by his exorcisms, afforded instantaneous relief to many persons with whom I am acquainted, and whom myself and physicians of much greater ability, were unable to cure. Had we possessed the same influence over their minds, the consequences would probably have been the same; for, I am perfectly convinced, that the cures performed by Gassner on persons afflicted with nervous diseases, were owing to the extraordinary power which he acquired over the imaginations of his patients. It was rather remarkable, that soon after Lavater broached his doctrine of the continuation of the faculty of performing miracles, this Catholic priest should apparently demonstrate by practice in Swabia and Bavaria, the truth of the theory taught by that celebrated Protestant divine at Zurich.

him with a sheep-skin, as a memorial of his friendship, and the esteem which he afterwards entertained for Hilarion, was so great, that he used to ask those who came from Syria to have their devils driven out, why they had not applied to Hilarion, who understood that art as well as himself.

Anthony, was now, not so much a hermit himself, as an apostle of Solitude, and a celebrated exorcist. His mode of life was still sufficiently rigid. His dress consisted of a hair-shirt next to his naked body, and over which he threw a mantle of sheep-skin. His appearance must have been filthy, for he never washed himself, never changed his dress, nor disturbed those animals, with which, in consequence, he was infested. He sometimes took no food till three o'clock in the afternoon, but, more commonly not till sun-set; frequently abstaining from it altogether, two, three, four, or even five days. Though his appetite might then be supposed tolerably keen, yet he contented himself with six ounces of stale, hard bread, soaked in water, and a little salt. If he happened to meet with a palm-tree, he sometimes indulged himself with a few dates; but, it was not till he had attained a very advanced age, that he permitted his disciples to supply him every month with olives, oil and vegetables.

Anthony, however, kept a table for his patients; before each meal, he recited twelve psalms, or repeated the same psalm twelve times, with twelve prayers at intervals. After the repast, he again performed the same service with his guests, and then retired to repose.

He lay upon a mat of reeds, and sometimes on

the bare ground; but most frequently he never fell asleep, but continued praying during the whole night. At other times, after a short slumber, he rose at midnight, and prayed with out-stretched arms till sun-rise, or even till three o'clock in the afternoon. He felt ashamed that he could not dispense with sleep and food, and this dependence upon corporeal necessities was so mortifying, that sometimes when he was seated at table with his brethren, he would start up, leave them, and either fast, or eat in private. Though he could scarcely endure that any person should see him eat, yet he occasionally took his repast with his brethren, only to have an opportunity of giving them good instruction.

Wearied with the crowds of patients that flocked to him for relief, Anthony withdrew from them and lived in solitary retirement. Penetrating still farther into the desert, he chose, as the place where he proposed to end his career, the mountain of Colzim, situated near the Red Sea. Here he found water and palm-trees, sowed wheat, and made his own bread, that he might be disturbed by no impertinent intruder, under the pretence of supplying him with provision. In this place he lived, at first, without any other society than that of a multitude of evil spirits, who were incessantly endeavoring to drive him from his retreat, and would doubtless have written against Solitude if the saint had been able to read.

Mount Colzim was situated in the desert that leads to the Red Sea, between Babylon and Heraclea, but was separated from those places by a tract so barren and dreary, that it could only be pas-

sed on camels. This, however, did not protect St. Anthony from visits, notwithstanding his known aversion to them, and the surly looks which he seldom failed to bestow on unwelcome intruders.

The mountain was, in other respects, agreeable; it was lofty, rocky, and not above a thousand paces in circumference. At its foot flowed a placid stream on whose banks the numerous palm-trees afforded a grateful shade. Anthony occupied himself in planting vines and trees, and in the cultivation of a small garden. This cost him much labor, but proved an excellent remedy against lassitude and languor. The situation was, however, subject to one inconvenience: a great number of wild asses, and other beasts of the desert, came to drink at the stream; but, at the same time, they laid waste the saint's garden, destroying every thing that he had planted and sowed. One day, Anthony commanded the ass that headed the troop, to stand still; the beast obeyed; when the saint, striking him very gently with a switch, forbade him and his companions, in the name of the Lord, ever to enter his garden again during their lives. The asses afterwards contented themselves with drinking quietly at the stream, and never committed any farther depredations.

The usual residence of this great saint, was a narrow cavern in the mountain, but just large enough to contain his body. Higher up the mountain, he had hewn out of the rock two other cells of the same size, which he had provided with doors. To these he retired when he wished to avoid the intrusions of visitors.

From Mount Colzim, Anthony frequently went

to Phaium, where he had collected his first disciples. But these visits were not so frequent as they wished, as to that place, it was a journey of three days and three nights, through a desert, destitute of water. Every five, ten, or twenty days, Anthony quitted his sacred mountain for the purpose of visiting Pispir, a place at a considerable distance, where a community of Cenobites was established. He occasionally undertook still more distant journies, and went several times to Alexandria. Of these, one of the most remarkable, was the visit, which, in the ninetieth year of his age, he paid to Paul, the first hermit, who, for nearly a century, had lived totally unconnected with mankind in solitary concealment.

From his own account of this journey, it appears, that the imagination of the aged saint must have been heated to an extraordinary degree. He declares, that, on the way, he was accosted by a monster, partly man, and partly horse, who intreated him in the names of a great number of animals of the same description, to pray to the Almighty in their behalf. He then informs us, that, as soon as he had arrived at the end of his journey, a raven brought twice the quantity of bread, that, for sixty years he had been accustomed to bring to Paul. This, however, was not all; the aged recluse informed the saint that his end was approaching, and to spare him the pain of being present at his death, he requested Anthony to fetch a mantle he had received from Athanasius, to wrap about his body. When Anthony returned with the mantle, he did not simply find Paul dead, but saw his immortal spirit ascend to heaven, surrounded with resplendent

glory, and accompanied by a host of angels and apostles. His mortal part he discovered lifeless, kneeling in the posture of prayer, and interred the body with the assistance of two lions.

Among the numerous visitors that resorted to Anthony, both at Pispir and at Colzim, were many philosophers, who came either to divert themselves at his expence, or to ridicule him as a fool and a madman. Some of these philosophers once asked him, how he could live without books. "My book," replied Anthony, "is God and Nature." On another occasion, he made this excellent remark: "A time will come, when mankind will be so foolish, that if they see a person who is not a fool, they will revile him as the only idiot in the world, because he does not resemble themselves."

The Coptic Martyrology contains the following anecdote, which might lead us to conclude that Anthony's views of futurity were not only correct, but even prophetic. Being once seated in the midst of his disciples, who expressed their astonishment at the great number of persons that devoted themselves to Solitude, and the zeal with which they proceeded in the path of virtue; at the same time, asking the saint, whether this pious ardor would continue much longer: "Alas!" he replied with tears, "the time will come, when the monks, quitting their caves, will repair to the great cities, where they will build themselves palaces, wallow in luxurious enjoyment, and be distinguished from the rest of the world, only by their habits and their arrogance."

His last journey to Alexandria, probably, hastened his death. He went thither to curse the here-

tics, and curses can never be uttered without spleen, which is always dangerous, and, at his age, generally proves fatal. The same cause which produced the death of Voltaire, at Paris, contributed not a little, I should conceive, to the dissolution of the great Anthony. The Alexandrians, like the modern Parisians, were volatile, active, ardent, and curious people. A strange animal, or a great man, set all Alexandria in motion. During his last visit to that city, the distraction and fatigue, occasioned by the multitudes both of christians and heathens, were such, that he sunk beneath them. All the inhabitants crowded to see the wonderful man, who had performed such extraordinary things, and many were contented if they could only touch his garment.

Thus terminated the long and glorious career of the great St. Anthony, in the one hundred and fifth year of his age. He died on his sacred mountain, in the arms of two of his monks, immediately after his return from Alexandria, leaving to the archbishop Athanasius, * his hair-shirt; his staff to St.

* Athanasius, Patriarch and Archbishop of Alexandria, has left a lasting memorial of his gratitude for this valuable bequest; for the life of the great Anthony is admitted by all to have been the production of his pen. The name of Athanasius, likewise, holds a distinguished place among the saints of the Romish church. In the year 335, however, the council of Tyre deprived him of his ecclesiastical dignity. The holy prelate was accused of having ravished a virgin, and murdered a bishop; and though he is said to have justified himself against these heavy charges, yet he was not re-instated in his see, but was exiled from Alexandria to Triers.

Macarius, and his example to all the votaries of Solitude.

Such examples of the most exalted piety, as Anthony was desirous to afford, produced an incredible multitude of christian imitators. Egypt, Lybia, Syria, Arabia, and Palestine, swarmed with this new race of devotees; they even spread into Abyssinia and Ethiopia. All these were disciples of Anthony, and the heirs of his exalted virtue. Each strove to attain the perfection of his great pattern; they mutually encouraged each other to persevere in the thorny path, and every one labored to propagate this divine philosophy. Strangers, from the most distant regions, resorted to Anthony's disciples and their scholars. Their virtuous lives, their heroic constancy in the painful path of abstinence and self-denial, procured them renown: "But yet," says Sozomen, "they were as desirous of remaining unknown, as their vain successors of acquiring the admiration of mankind."

Anthony, however, had only discovered a narrow and not much frequented path, to heaven. His disciple, Pachomius, pointed out an easier way, for he, in fact, laid the foundation, in Egypt, of all the monastic institutions in christendom. Pachomius, a disbanded soldier, but, in my opinion, a much greater and more sensible man than Anthony, the Egyptian peasant, was exempt from the melancholy madness of his master, notwithstanding the infirmity of his constitution. He likewise possessed superior mental attainments, and understood, by inspiration, as we are told, the Greek and Latin languages. The anachoret Palemon invested him

with the monastic habit, after which they lived together in a cave upon a mountain.

Upon an island of the Nile, called Tabenna, near the residence of these two holy men, were situated the remains of a deserted village. Pachomius, who sometimes went to the island to procure wood, conceived a desire of living among these ruins, and Palemon assisted him in the erection of a small habitation. They parted, promising to visit each other once a year. Palemon, soon afterwards, fell sick; Pachomius fetched two physicians from the neighboring town of Panapolis, who very rationally told the patient that he must eat; but, as he refused to follow their advice, his death was the natural consequence.

Pachomius continued to reside at Tabenna, where he was soon joined by his brother. He had not seen him, or any other individual of his family, since his discharge from the Roman army. They enlarged their house, in the hope that their society would be encreased by other well-disposed persons. But his brother died, and Pachomius was again left by himself.

In this lonely retreat, Pachomius was exposed to the attacks of the devil, and had extraordinary visions; but this is not surprising, for he had accustomed himself to watching, till he could pass forty nights successively without sleep. Unable to endure this situation, Pachomius had a very rational vision, in consequence of which he resolved to procure companions. When, therefore, he was afterwards visited by any person who appeared desirous of embracing a life of Solitude, he persuaded him to remain, and to assume the monastic habit.

Thus, in the languor experienced by Pachomius in a state of solitary seclusion, originated the first regular cloister, at Tabenna, about the year 325. Besides that of Tabenna, he founded eight other cloisters in the desert of Thebais.

In these monasteries the monks were engaged in a variety of occupations, but their most common employment, which they pursued even in the church, was the making of mats. The sick only were exempted from labor. The neighboring mountains supplied them with wood for fuel, and for constructing their habitations.

They assembled each morning and evening, and likewise in the night, to receive instruction, and to join in prayer. The smallest faults were severely punished by penance and the scourge ; and those who remained incorrigible were expelled from the community. They were permitted to converse on no other subject than the scriptures or their monastic duties, and, at certain intervals, they were enjoined profound silence. None durst relate within the cloister, what he had heard out of it, none possessed a will of his own, being directed, in every circumstance, by the orders of the superior.

Pachomius had soon collected fourteen hundred monks at Tabenna, and there were, in the whole, three thousand that conformed to his regulations. His reputation, the fame of his virtues, the order and regularity of his monasteries, were celebrated in distant countries. Strangers from Armenia, from the regions of the west, and even from Rome, flocked to the great Pachomius to receive the benefit of his instruction and example.

To a whim of the great Pachomius is owing all

the anguish experienced by those females, who are condemned by stupidity, superstition, or inhuman folly, to the confinement of a cloister, that they may there learn to despise the pleasures of the world, to renounce the sentiments of nature and affection, and where the most innocent, the most delicious feelings of the heart incur the keenest reproaches of the inexorable domina. Pachomius founded the first nunnery, at Tabenna, the superintendence of which he committed to his sister. It soon contained four hundred virgins, all of whom he required to cut off their hair, and to assume the sacred cowl. But contentions and female passions found their way into this first nunnery; for Palladius relates, that, one of the nuns, having, upon some provocation, accused another of a crime, the latter immediately drowned herself, and the accuser put a period to her life with a cord.

Pachomius frequently visited the monasteries of the monks belonging to his own order, but, when prevented by infirmity, he sent in his stead persons in whom he could confide. He likewise maintained a constant correspondence with the superiors. He particularly recommended to his disciples, to disclose all the temptations by which they were assailed, to the most experienced and enlightened of their brethren, that they might learn from them how to cure the diseases of the mind. Pachomius was too well acquainted, by experience, with the effects of melancholy in monastic seclusion, and he solemnly declares, that many monks had thrown themselves down precipices, and dispatched themselves with knives, or in various other ways.

A very peculiar trait in the character of an Egyp-

tian, a saint and a monk, was, in my opinion, the dislike of Pachomius to works of super-erogation. Every monk in his convents was obliged to make daily a mat of reeds; for, as these monks were rude and illiterate peasants, they could not be expected to be continually employed in prayer. One of them having once made two mats in a day, hung them, out of vanity, where he knew they must be observed by Pachomius. The father, when he saw them, turning with a frown of displeasure to the monk who accompanied him: "Behold," said he, "how this wretched sinner labors from morning till night for the devil, merely for the honor of making two mats a day instead of one." Pachomius then sent for him, and ordered him to appear at the church and the refectory, with the two mats in his hand, and to beg pardon of his brethren, for having, out of vanity, wished to appear better than they. This was not the extent of his punishment. The poor monk was confined to his cell five months, upon bread and water, and was compelled to make two mats every day.

Pachomius did not live to a great age. In the year 348, an epidemical disease raged in all the convents belonging to his community, which, in a short time, carried off above one hundred monks, and among the rest, Pachomius himself, in the fifty-seventh year of his age, and the thirty-fifth of his Solitude.

The extravagance of St. Anthony obtained the universal admiration of the east. The monastic institutions of Pachomius were, on the contrary, too conformable to reason and nature, to please the fanatic Egyptians, for any great length of time.

While their novelty continued, they obtained numerous adherents, but they were soon abandoned and forgotten. The spirit of their founder rested, indeed, for a time, upon the monks after his death, but the community of Tabenna gradually lost their love of order, their moderation, and purity of manners. As the number of monks increased, worldly cares were augmented in proportion, and every virtuous principle was relinquished. The superiors, not being endowed with the understanding of Pachomius, were engaged in contests for precedency. Thus a holy and industrious life was changed to a scene of contention, indolence, and guilt. Wicked men alone attained to honor and distinction in the Egyption convents, where they persecuted the friends of genuine virtue.

The Egyptian monks, at this period, were properly divided into Cenobites, Anachorets, Remoboth or Sarabaites, and Wandering Monks. The Cenobites lived together in communities, but at a considerable distance from any inhabited place, in the midst of burning and arid sands. Anachorets were those who lived alone, secluded from the rest of mankind. These were in general such who, after completing their noviciate among the Cenobites, forsook the habitation of the community, and retired into the desert, living only upon bread and salt. Of the Remoboth or Sarabaites, two or three lived together under no control, and perfectly independent of each other, subsisting on the common produce of their labor. Many of this class likewise resided in the towns and villages. The wandering monks received their name from the short stay which they made in a place. They had originally

devoted themselves to a monastic life, but weary of restraint, they retired to separate cells, to maintain the appearance of virtue, in situations where vice cannot be detected. All these different classes of monks were the spiritual offspring of the great Anthony, they all honored him as their father, and their example was equally productive of imitators.

His spiritual son, Hilarion, though he separated from Anthony, was yet animated with the same spirit. Retiring into the dreary desert, between Gaza and Egypt, he first inhabited a wretched hut, and afterwards a cell, in which he could not stand erect. Here he lived two-and-twenty years, till the fame of his sanctity drew to him great numbers of diseased persons, whom he cured by means of the miraculous powers with which he was endued. By the example of Hilarion, the love of a monastic life was propagated throughout Syria, but particularly in Palestine, and he likewise converted great numbers of heathen to the christian faith.

Ammonius, another disciple of Anthony, was the father of the numerous colony of monks, established in the deserts of Nitria, and whose fame afterwards spread to the remotest regions. A singular circumstance is related of him. In his youth his relations obliged him to take a wife, and he therefore married a young and beautiful lady. On the wedding-night he addressed to her a long discourse against matrimony, with such effect, that, leaving the bridal chamber, both the husband and wife retired into the desert, where they lived in Solitude, separate from each other.

From a love of liberty and ambition, many preferred the life of an anachoret to that of a monk, on

which account, probably, the number of anachorets far exceeded that of the monks. These enthusiasts thought it more agreeable to wander naked in the wilderness without restraint, or to feed upon grass with the beasts of the field, than to submit to the rigid discipline of a cloister.*

In those days of universal superstition, and the most unbridled enthusiasm, when whole nations appeared deprived of their senses, the pure doctrines of christianity, which teach the practice of every social virtue, were either not regarded, or not understood. Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia, Paphlagonia, Pontus, Cappadocia, and Armenia, were in a short time overrun with hosts of enthusiasts, who, in imitation of the sublime examples of Paul, Anthony, and their frantic successors, withdrew from society, submitting to hunger, penury, and bodily pain, in order to merit heaven,

* "They sunk," says Gibbon, "under the weight of crosses and chains; and their emaciated limbs were confined by collars, bracelets, gauntlets, and greaves of massy and rigid iron. All superfluous incumbrance of dress they contemptuously cast away; and some savage saints of both sexes have been admired, whose naked bodies were only covered by their long hair. They aspired to reduce themselves to the rude and miserable state in which the human brute is scarcely distinguished above his kindred animals; and a numerous sect of Anachorets derived their name from their humble practice of grazing in the fields of Mesopotamia with the common herd. They often usurped the den of some wild beast whom they affected to resemble; they buried themselves in some gloomy cavern, which art or nature had scooped out of the rock, and the marble quarries of Thebais are still inscribed with the monuments of their penance." T.

or, by their indolence and folly, to obtain the honor and respect of mankind. The deserts of Egypt were no longer peopled, nor the ranks of the monks recruited, with Platonic philosophers, but with beggars, vagabonds, slaves, and malefactors, inured to hunger, poverty, stripes and hard labor; or culprits, who sought an asylum from the just vengeance of the law. The most infamous of mankind commanded respect in the monastic habit, and the cowl instantly procured the vilest malefactor the veneration due to a saint.

Laws were found ineffectual to check this monastic mania. In the year 373, the emperor Valens issued an edict commanding that those who, to avoid the performance of civil offices, had withdrawn from the cities, and retired into deserts, should be forced from their retreats, and compelled to fulfil the duties of their offices, or to resign their property to such as were willing to execute them in their stead. The same emperor soon after proceeded against the monks with increased severity. He made a law, by which they were condemned to be scourged to death, if they refused to serve in the army, or to discharge the functions of civil employments. In consequence of this decree, many monks suffered death in Egypt. Valentinian III. published an ordinance forbidding any slave, laborer, or other vassal, to be received into the communities of monks, if he had no other view than to escape from servitude.

All these laws and ordinances, could not, however, prevent the propagation of monastic principles, and sometimes the emperors themselves repealed the edicts which they had issued. In the year 390,

Theodosius the elder passed a law, enjoining all monks to retire to their caves and deserts. This law appeared directed, in a particular manner, against the Egyptian and Syrian monks, who, under the pretence of ardent zeal, poured into the cities, exciting commotions, preventing the administration of justice, and waging an open war against the heathens and their idols, whose temples they destroyed. Theodosius, in a short time, thought proper to repeal this edict, declaring that it had been extorted from him by the magistrates, who were prejudiced against these sacred characters. By a law of Justinian, that emperor prohibited parents from disinheriting their sons, who had embraced the monastic life contrary to their inclination.

The progress of monachism was now rapid and uninterrupted. The monks procured respect at the imperial court by the fame of their sanctity; several empresses honored them with their patronage; while the people, with equal edification and astonishment, saw men arrive from the deserts, bending beneath the weight of iron fetters, assumed for the purpose of mortifying their bodies, and who hoped by their long hair, flowing beards, bare feet, and deficiency in cleanliness, to command respect. Men of the highest talents, a Basil, a Gregory Nazianzen, a Chrysostom, embraced the monastic life. Though the feebleness of their constitutions soon caused them to abandon their Solitude, and to return to society, yet they continued zealous advocates of monachism, and by their writings and discourses, induced multitudes to embrace a life of retirement.

Chrysostom.

John, with the golden mouth, commonly called Chrysostom, archbishop and patriarch of Constantinople, a man universally respected for his learning, his eloquence, and the purity of his manners, was an ardent promoter of this general inclination for spiritual adventures. In his youth, he had himself gone in quest of them, notwithstanding the most affecting remonstrances of his mother, to dissuade him from his purpose. She was a woman of high rank and considerable wealth; and being left a widow, soon after his birth, had brought up her son, amidst numerous difficulties, with the utmost tenderness and care. She entreated him with tears not to plunge her a second time into widowhood, but to postpone the execution of his cruel and unchristian intention till after her death. She told the youthful enthusiast, that, so far from pleasing, he would offend the Almighty, if he ungratefully abandoned his mother. Chrysostom, however, from whom we have this account, conceiving that his duty to God was superior to that which he owed to his parent, violated, without the slightest remorse, the filial duties of obedience and affection. These found no place in the system of monastic morality. Soon after the year 370, Chrysostom retired from Antioch to the neighboring mountains, where he lived as a monk, in total seclusion from the world and his mother.

Chrysostom did not long remain in monastic retirement, where he impaired his health and enfeebled his constitution: he, however, continued to exert all the powers of his eloquence to promote the inclination to a solitary life. His talents, his distinguished situation, and uncommon influence, ren-

dered it easy for him to inflame the minds of the greatest part of christendom with a love of monastic seclusion. After returning from retirement, he was ordained a presbyter at Antioch, and elevated by Eutropius, the prime minister of the emperor, to the dignity of Archbishop and Patriarch of Constantinople. Educated in the school of the celebrated orator and philosopher, Libanius, endowed with the most persuasive eloquence, and imbued with the spirit of the greatest characters that adorned the commonwealths of Greece and Rome, Chrysostom entered upon his official duties in the metropolis of the world. It cannot be denied, that the doctrines he inculcated were the more powerful and impressive, because, among his many excellent qualities, he retained some striking traits of the monastic character. He was chaste and abstemious, but likewise petulant and zealous; a stranger to artifice and dissimulation, censuring, with the greatest freedom, persons even of the highest rank. His inclination led him to avoid society, so that, to those who were unacquainted with him, he appeared proud, melancholy, and morose. His virtue was unimpeached, his benevolence active and extensive; for he founded hospitals with the large revenues of his see, dissipated by his predecessors in pomp, ostentation, and luxurious indulgence. The people, whose welfare he was so anxious to promote, attended, with greater pleasure, the eloquent and impressive sermons of the archbishop, than the diversions of the circus or the theatre. His language was elegant, animated, copious, and sublime; he knew how to win every heart, and to direct, at pleasure, every passion.

The writings and exertions of St. Jerome, in behalf of a monastic life, are distinguished by still greater power, equal eloquence, a superior knowledge of mankind, and an irresistible zeal, like the impetuous torrent, bearing down all opposition. Jerome was born in Sclavonia, about the year 342, of christian parents, who sent him while very young to Rome, where he prosecuted his studies with great assiduity. His ardent genius enabled him to make a rapid proficiency in the Latin language, rhetoric, and philosophy; but the excellencies of Virgil and Tully, did not render him insensible to the attractions of female beauty. Leaving Rome, he visited Gaul, and the shores of the Rhine, and at length arrived at Aquieleia, whence, he says, an unexpected whirlwind carried him into the east.

He, however, first visited his native country, and then, for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, he abandoned his house, his father, mother, sister, and other relatives, and what, according to his own confession, he regretted still more, an excellent table. He took with him the books he had collected at Rome; and thus, after traversing Thrace, Pontus, Bithynia, Galatia, Cappadocia and Cilicia, he at length chose a place in Syria for his residence as a hermit.

Sensual desire was Jerome's greatest enemy. He himself candidly acknowledges, that a change of place does not alter the disposition; that his enemy followed him into his Syrian Solitude, and that he there endured greater torments than before, from the flame of impure desire. But a man of Jerome's superior genius, could not long endure a life of such rigid abstinence and total seclusion. He was at-

tacked, in his cave, by a complication of disorders. His constitution was naturally feeble, and his retired life reduced him to the lowest state of debility. The loss of his health restored him to his reason; he quitted his Solitude, went to Antioch, and was there ordained a priest. He then visited Constantinople, and returned, in the year 382, to Rome, where he lived three years as private secretary to Pope Damasus.

In this situation, Jerome became an extraordinary favorite of the Roman ladies, one of whom, Marcella, a person of distinguished rank, and, as it likewise appears, of great beauty, took him to reside in her palace. On this occasion, the pious Tillemont observes, that, as the palaces of the most illustrious Roman ladies were, in those days, as large as towns, Jerome might reside in that of the virtuous Marcella, without any violation of decorum.

He now gave instructions to many Roman ladies of rank, and was considered the ablest expounder of the scriptures of any of his contemporaries; on which subject he was consulted even by Pope Damasus himself. He was celebrated for the elegance and irresistible eloquence of his writings, the sublimity of his conceptions, his profound penetration, and the power of his language. Damasus had now attained the age of seventy-five years, and it was generally expected at Rome, that, upon his death, Jerome would be appointed his successor. The beautiful widow, Marcella, was his first disciple; she became a nun, contributed to the erection of several convents at Rome, and supported him with all her influence.

The example of Marcella was followed by the

pious Paula, a lady of high rank, vast fortune, and great sensibility. She was descended from the family of the Gracchi and Cornelii, and had been left a widow with five children. She could not withstand the persuasive eloquence of Jerome; seduced by the blasphemous appellation of *Mother-in-law of God*,* she completed the triumph of her spiritual father.

The same enthusiasm with which Jerome inspired Paula, the latter infused into her daughter, Eustochium. The fair Eustochium eagerly adopted the sublime ideas of seclusion from the world; she soon felt the most powerful inclination for a life of celibacy and Solitude; and, it was for her instruction and edification, that Jerome wrote his celebrated letter on the preservation of virginity.

It is almost impossible to conceive the agitation which this letter occasioned at Rome, or the rage and indignation with which Jerome was now attacked from every quarter. The whole city exclaimed that the letter was a satire. Every one could point out passages, and name the persons whom he there intended to describe. Many females, of high rank and loose manners, discovered in it their own portraits, and regarded Jerome, not as the friendly monitor, but as a traitor, who publicly exposed their irregularities.

Jerome's high reputation was now destroyed; the esteem, procured by his learning and talents, had vanished. Those who still, in private, kissed his hands and embraced him, abused him, in public,

* *Socrus Dei* was a very common compliment paid by Jerome to Paula.

with the utmost asperity, and rejoiced to hear his character vilified and traduced. Jerome, Paula, and Eustochium, however, had now suddenly conceived the greatest contempt for Rome; they resolved to withdraw from the follies of the world, and to retire into sacred Solitude.

Jerome departed first, and travelled alone to the east. Paula resolved, at all events, to terminate her life in his company. Dividing almost the whole of her remaining property among her children, she tore herself from their extended arms, and subduing every obstacle, she set sail, with her daughter Eustochium, for the regions of the east. In the company of her beloved Jerome, Paula visited Egypt, where she was welcomed by an innumerable multitude of monks. She felt a great inclination to fix her residence here, but a more powerful impulse induced her to return to the sacred scenes she had beheld in Palestine, on her way to Egypt. Retiring to Bethlehem, she there lived three years in a small house, till a convent was built for her; where she resided many years, in pious and constant communion with her spiritual father, who took up his abode in a cell, out of the village, near the sepulchre of one of the Jewish monarchs.

In this hallowed retirement, the productions of Jerome's pen were more powerful in their effects, than those of any writer of that age. He still continued to exert his uncommon talents to promote the cause of celibacy, and every kind of abstinence. He watched, with eagle eye, over the morals of the monks and nuns. Nothing roused his indignation like an amorous intrigue between these votaries of

Solitude, having himself experienced, in early life, the baneful effects of criminal desire.

A circumstance of this kind occurred, even in one of the convents founded at Bethlehem, by the pious Paula, with a man who came from Rome in her retinue. The lover was Sabinianus, an Italian ecclesiastic and deacon, of great experience in such affairs. While in Italy, he had frequented all the brothels, ravished virgins, violated the conjugal bed of many persons of high rank, and occasioned the public execution of several women, whose infidelity was discovered. He at length became acquainted with the wife of one of the most distinguished Goths, whom he likewise seduced. Upon the discovery of his shame, the indignant husband pursued the author of it in the hope of revenge. Sabinianus, having procured a letter of recommendation from his bishop, embarked, and fled to Bethlehem, to St. Jerome, in order to devote himself to heaven in a convent.

Jerome received him kindly, and placed him in a monastery, founded by himself at Bethlehem, exhorting him to lead a life of chastity and virtue, which Sabinianus, without hesitation, solemnly promised. But, one day, in the church, he beheld a beautiful nun, belonging to Paula's convent, who had accompanied that great saint from Rome; and of this nun he became enamored. A correspondence ensued, and the nun, at length, promised Sabinianus to comply with all his wishes. The affair was, however, discovered before it had proceeded any farther, and Sabinianus fell at Jerome's feet, imploring his forgiveness. Though he had rendered himself liable to the punishment of death, yet he obtained

the pardon of the holy man, who ordered him to do penance in sackcloth and ashes, to retire to the wilderness, and there, with incessant tears, to implore the forgiveness of the Almighty.

So far from obeying this injunction, Sabinianus indulged in pleasures, calumniating Jerome, and ridiculing his precepts. The saint, however, silenced the sinner, by merely taking up his pen, and writing a letter, which is still extant.

"The whole church," says he, "resounded at midnight with the sacred songs of the vigils. Many nations in many languages, with one soul, and one spirit, chaunted hymns of praise to the Almighty. You seized this moment to lay, beneath the high altar, on the very spot where the manger of the Lord was placed, the acknowledgment of your guilty passion; and the wretched woman, approaching the altar, under the pretence of kneeling down to pray, took up your letter. You stood, meanwhile, in the company of those who were zealously singing the praises of their Maker, and gazed upon her with looks of lustful desire. In the sacred birth-place of the Savior, you received, as a pledge of your love, the hair of this unhappy virgin, which had been dedicated to God. You then followed her to another church, to the place where the angel appeared to the shepherds, and there again breathed forth your impious vows. Veneration for these sacred places forbids me to think, that you sinned but in heart and mind. Miserable wretch! when you stood in the birth-place of the Redeemer with the guilty object of your desires, were you not struck blind, did not your tongue become stiff, your

arms motionless; did not your bosom heave, and your legs refuse to perform their office? And this nun, this virgin, consecrated to a celestial lover, who took the vow in the church of St. Peter, at Rome, who afterwards swore, before the altars of three churches at Jerusalem, to love God alone, and to devote her life to his service, dared to present you her hair, sacred to Christ, as a pledge that she would be yours; and you ventured to accept the gift! You then planted yourself from evening until day-break beneath her window, and, as its height prevented you from coming together, a cord was employed for the conveyance of your profane correspondence. The sun always rose too early for you, while, in the mean time, we thought you were sitting in your cell, watching and praying, and that your paleness proceeded from the severity of pious exercises. The ladder was already prepared, by which the deluded creature was to have descended to you, the route was planned, a ship was in readiness, the day was appointed, and your flight resolved upon, when your base intrigues were unexpectedly discovered by an angel of the Lord. Cursed was the day, on which, with deep amazement, I first perused your letters! What an exuberance of lewdness and iniquity I there beheld! What caresses! What rejoicing at the expected success of your base designs!"

These traits, will be sufficient to shew what kind of a character St. Jerome was. His life and writings contributed, in a most extraordinary degree, to promote the monastic system. His rules and precepts were solemnly observed by the whole catholic church. His example rendered his pre-

cepts more powerfully impressive, and his animated eloquence filled enthusiastic minds with unbounded ardor for the senseless philosophy of anti-social life.

As early as the fourth century bishops were elected from among the monks. The more rigid, indeed, disapproved of this proceeding, and Pachomius would not even suffer any of his monks to be ordained. The ambitious desire of ecclesiastical rank and dignities, however, soon became general among them. The meanest wretch exercised himself in every monastic virtue, and pretended to perform innumerable miracles, in the hope of one day becoming a saint and a bishop.

From these various motives, the spirit of the monastic system encreased in the regions of the east, particularly in the melancholy and superstitious country of Egypt, where almost as many monks were seen in the deserts, as inhabitants in the towns. Five thousand monks were very soon collected in the mountains of Nitria. In the fourth century, the number of all the monks and nuns, in the great convents, amounted to ninety-six thousand; the hermits and monks, living in the smaller institutions, were innumerable. In the towns of Egypt, the monks were also very numerous. The town of Oxyrinthus, in Thebais, contained two thousand of these holy men, and twenty thousand holy virgins: so that the number of sacred buildings exceeded that of the houses.

"These unhappy exiles from social life," says the eloquent Gibbon, "were impelled by the dark and implacable genius of superstition. Their mutual resolution was supported by the example of

millions of either sex, of every age, and of every rank; and each proselyte, who entered the gates of a monastery, was persuaded that he trod the steep and thorny path of eternal happiness. The prince or magistrate, the soldier or merchant, reconciled their fervent zeal and implicit faith with the exercise of their profession, the pursuit of their interest, and the indulgence of their passions: but the Ascetics, who obeyed and abused the rigid precepts of the gospel, were inspired by the savage enthusiasm, which represents man as a criminal and God as a tyrant.

"They seriously renounced the business and the pleasures of the age; abjured the use of wine, of flesh, and of marriage; chastised their body, mortified their affections, and embraced a life of misery, as the price of eternal happiness. In the reign of Constantine, the Ascetics fled from a profane and degenerate world, to perpetual Solitude, or religious society. Like the first Christians of Jerusalem, they resigned the use, or the property, of their temporal possessions; established regular communities of the same sex and of a similar disposition; and assumed the name of Hermits, Monks, and Anachorets. They soon acquired the respect of the world, which they despised; and the loudest applause was bestowed on this *divine philosophy*, which surpassed, without the aid of science or reason, the laborious virtues of the Grecian schools. The monks might indeed contend with the stoics, in the contempt of fortune, of pain, and of death; the Pythagorean silence and submission were revived in their servile discipline; and they disdained, as firmly as the Cynics themselves, all the forms and decencies of civil society. But

the votaries of this divine philosophy aspired to imitate a purer and more perfect model. They trod in the footsteps of the prophets, who had retired to the deserts; and they restored the devout and contemplative life, which had been instituted by the Essenians in Palestine and Egypt. The philosophic eye of Pliny, had surveyed, with astonishment, a solitary people who dwelt among the palm-trees near the Dead Sea, who subsisted without money, who were propagated without women, and who derived, from the disgust and repentance of mankind, a perpetual supply of voluntary associates.

" The most perfect hermits are supposed to have passed many days without food, many nights without sleep, and many years without speaking; and glorious was the *man* (I abuse the name) who contrived any cell or seat, of a peculiar construction, which might expose him, in the most inconvenient posture, to the inclemency of the seasons.

" Among these heroes of the monastic life, the name and genius of Simeon Stylites have been immortalized, by the singular invention of an aërial penance. At the age of thirteen, the young Syrian deserted the profession of a shepherd, and threw himself into an austere monastery. After a long and painful noviciate, in which Simeon was repeatedly saved from pious suicide, he established his residence on a mountain, about thirty or forty miles to the east of Antioch. Within the space of a *mandra*, or circle of stones, to which he had attached himself by a ponderous chain, he ascended a column which was successively raised from the height of nine, to that of sixty feet from the ground.

In this last, and lofty station, the Syrian Anachoret resisted the heat of thirty summers, and the cold of as many winters. Habit and exercise instructed him to maintain his dangerous situation without fear or giddiness, and successively to assume the different postures of devotion. He sometimes prayed in an erect attitude, with his out-stretched arms in the figure of a cross; but his most familiar practice was that of bending his meagre skeleton from the forehead to the feet: and a curious spectator, after numbering twelve hundred and forty-four repetitions, at length desisted from the endless account. The progress of an ulcer in his thigh, might shorten, but it could not disturb, this *celestial* life; and the patient hermit expired, without descending from his column."

The sentiments of the English philosopher, perfectly accord with the intrinsic excellence of the votaries of Solitude in Egypt and the east, during the early ages of the Christian church. But all the admirers of their follies will blush, when I shew them that their virtues are equalled by those of the heathen enthusiasts of Asia, both in ancient and modern times, and that in these, the love of Solitude and total seclusion from the world is not less constant and invariable.

The Brachmans, or Gymnosophists, are the most ancient solitary sect of India with which we are acquainted. They did not, indeed, avoid marriage as sinful, but the father devoted his son, from his earliest infancy, to a speculative life. The youth received instruction in the art of living in Solitude and continual silence, occupied only with study. His noviciate ended with his twenty-sixth

year. Renouncing all kinds of business or employment, these people then retired to a mountain, or the silent banks of a river, where they lived in the contemplation of philosophic truths, abstaining from animal food, and rigidly adhering to habits of the utmost cleanliness.

The modern votaries of Solitude, in India, are not philosophers of this stamp. They are all imitators of a ridiculous enthusiast, who bears a great resemblance to St. Anthony, and still more to the mystics of modern times, the Vichnou of the Siamese, the Badhum of the Cingalese, the Xaca Sacka, or Siacka of the Chinese or Japanese, or, as he is commonly called, Fo, Foe, or Fotoque, that is, the idol. This deity, or rather this legislator, in his nineteenth year, abandoned his palace, his wife, and his son, to lead a speculative life, under the direction of a hermit. He withdrew from visible objects, that he might see those which are invisible. In the opinion of the Indians, the grossness of sense vanishes, when a man sits cross-legged, with his hands upon his breast, and his thumbs close together. In this ascetic position Fo discovered the profound mysteries of his religion, the art of stifling all sensation, that he might soar the more freely on the wings of fancy. He then left his Solitude, and propagated his doctrines among the people. He was soon attended by an innumerable multitude of disciples, who filled India with his falsehoods. The Pendets of Hindoostan, the Talapoins of Siam, the Lamas of Tartary, and the Bonzees of China believe in him alone. The religion of Foe is the predominant religion in the East Indies, and the book in which all his precepts were collected after

his death, for the use of all the Asiatic nations, is called *Fokekio,* or for the sake of distinction, only *Kio,* the book, the book of books.

The disciples of Fo were joined by the descendants of the ancient Gymnosophists. Numerous sects arose, who were engaged in continual disputes, which so far from making their doctrines more intelligible, tended only to encrease the confusion.

One of these sects is composed of professed hypocrites and shameless voluptuaries, called Gioghis. According to their rules, they ought to avoid society, lead an eremitical or at least an unsettled or wandering life, go without clothes and be continually absorbed in profound contemplation. They ought to torment and mortify their bodies in every way that can possibly be devised, not under the idea that the creator receives pleasure from the sufferings of the creature, but to prove, that their intense meditation on the deity raises them above all considerations of sense, and renders them insensible to bodily pain and temporal affliction. To prove that their minds are perfectly independent of the influence of their bodies, the Gioghis not only appear regardless of pain, but insensible to sensual pleasures.

Santons or Fakirs, that is, people who have renounced the world, are very numerous in the regions of India. Under this name are comprehended persons of every color and complection. The number of Mohammedan Fakirs is estimated at eight hundred thousand, and that of the heathen at twelve hundred thousand. Many live in a kind of convents under the direction of a superior; like

the monks of Europe, they take the vow of obedience, poverty and chastity, and keep it in the same manner. They sit day and night by the side of pools, or in the galleries of their temples. They all go without clothes, and this propensity to appear naked is so strong that they would rather suffer death than renounce it. Bernier saw at Delhi a Fakir, whom Aurengzeb had forbidden to appear naked in the streets upon pain of death. The Fakir continued to walk about as before, and underwent the punishment accordingly.

The whole of the East Indies and Persia swarms with monks of every sect and description. Corea is full of convents and temples. Many of these contain six hundred monks, who are under the jurisdiction of a town, and some of the towns tolerate, within their walls, four thousand of these indolent and useless members of society.

The account given by M. Sonnerat, a French traveller, of these Indian enthusiasts is extremely striking. "The Indian penitents," says this eye-witness, "abandon their families and their property, which they exchange for a life of misery. Some lacerate themselves with scourges, or chain themselves during their whole lives to the foot of a tree. Others continually keep their bodies in a painful posture, and closing their fists suffer their nails to grow through their hands; while others constantly hold their arms crossed before their breasts or extended above their heads, being fed by their disciples. Many bury themselves in the earth, receiving air through a small aperture, while others are contented with being covered only to the neck. Some take a vow to stand during their whole lives;

these, when overpowered by sleep, lean against a wall or a tree; and to prevent themselves from falling, they put their heads through a kind of frame. Others again stand many hours successively on one leg, at the same time looking stedfastly at the sun. Others holding up one foot support themselves only on the great toe of the other, extend their arms over their heads, and thus, surrounded with four vessels filled with fire, they fix their eyes immoveably upon the sun. Others appear in public, naked, to shew that they have renounced every human passion, and that since they devoted themselves to God, they live in a state of perfect innocence: they are regarded as saints by the people; who imagine that all their prayers are granted; every one is anxious to supply them with food, to put it into their mouths, and to wash them, as they voluntarily deprive themselves of the use of their own hands for that purpose."

All these madmen, like the hermits of Syria and Egypt, are influenced only by vanity and the desire to obtain admiration and respect. They despise all who are not of their own condition, though they seek the veneration of all mankind. Whoever does not belong to their order is called profane, and every thing that concerns themselves is enveloped in mystery.

Thus we see that all the enthusiastic votaries of Solitude resemble each other in every religion. All of them render Solitude burdensome, and all seek, by these means, to obtain the felicities of heaven, union with God and honor from their fellow creatures. All revolve round one common centre of folly.

It appears from this brief sketch that the inclination to Solitude has many corresponding features in warm climates, among Heathen and Jews, Mohammedans and Christians. The air, the soil and what is denominated the temperament of a nation, must have had some influence on the extraordinary turn which the christian religion took in Asia and Africa, and all the extravagances into which it there degenerated. This may probably afford an explanation of the universal impulse to Solitude among the professors of so many different religions.

It will first be necessary to consider the natural properties of Egypt, as that country has been, in every age, the nursery of so many recluses, and consequently some general causes must exist which, in a particular manner, dispose the natives of that country to Solitude.

Egypt is one of the hottest regions of the globe. The spring begins in January and ends in the following month. The heats of summer continue till August. In the month of May the grapes are ripe. The winter, which is extremely mild, lasts from November to December. In March, April and May the winds that blow at noon are so intolerably hot, that they seem to proceed from a heated oven. It would be impossible to endure the heat, if the atmosphere were not soon afterwards cooled by refreshing breezes and the inundation of the Nile. Excepting the sea-coasts, the whole country of Egypt is arid and sandy. In middle and upper Egypt it scarcely ever rains; at least the rain there is hardly equal to the dew with us. The sky is in consequence uncommonly serene. Travellers who have passed four or five years in Egypt have declar-

ed, that they never observed it over-cast either by day or night.

Indolence and inactivity are the natural consequences of excessive heat. For this reason the Italians say that the luxury of doing nothing, *il delicioso far niente*, is the greatest of blessings in a hot climate. Hence the Turks are entirely destitute of curiosity and fond of repose. Hence the Egyptians, like the Syrians and all the Eastern nations, never seek pleasure in motion; their only occupations are smoking tobacco and drinking coffee. This relaxation produces a propensity to a life of indolence and Solitude, even in the most ardent mind, which here has no excitement to extraordinary activity.

According to all accounts both ancient and modern, the Egyptians were a gloomy people and addicted to melancholy. In their character are combined all the signs of that temperament, which, by the ancients, was denominated *melancholy*, the cause of which they attributed to a redundance of black bile. Both history and observation tend to prove the influence of the atmosphere, soil and temperament of Egypt upon the constitution of its inhabitants.

The Mohammedan ecclesiastics of Egypt bear a considerable resemblance to the swarthy, haggard and contentious monks, who swarmed in that country during the early ages of christianity. The Turkish clergy in Egypt is divided into three classes; the first performs the service of the mosques; the second is composed of monks, who live in convents remote from human society, and the third consists partly of anachorets leading a se-

questered life in deserts, and partly of wandering saints.

The Mohammedan monks residing in the Egyptian convents are called dervises. They lead a life of celibacy, study philosophy and theology, and spend the whole day in reading in the shade. A European traveller found, in a convent near Cairo, forty of these monks, whom he was ready to take for physicians, being all of different opinions.* Some appeared to be atheists, others contended according to the Epicurean system for the mortality of the soul, while others maintained its immortality. Many seemed to favor the doctrines of Christ more than those of Mohammed.

The wandering saints, however, compose the greatest portion of the Mohammedan religion in Egypt. They are called by the Europeans Santons, and by the Arabs, Seiks; a word which signifies a person who is half a saint and half a madman.

Climate and constitution also, are the principal causes of the love of tranquillity and seclusion in the Indian saints and hermits. But their temperament has striking peculiarities, being very different

* I hope I shall be pardoned this expression, as it reminds me of a Roman Proconsul who sent for all the philosophers of Athens and signified to them, by virtue of his office, that he had perceived, with great regret, that they always differed in their opinions; at the same time offering them every assistance that his official situation could afford, to make them of one mind. The philosophers instantly agreed in one particular; they laughed unanimously at the folly of the Proconsul.

from that of the Egyptians, though in one respect they perfectly correspond.

A far greater relaxation and listlessness of mind and consequently a greater deficiency of energy prevail among many of the Asiatic nations. Hence their want of curiosity, their adherence to ancient manners and customs, their indolence, their abject submission and their unalterable love of Solitude and repose. Hence the fondness of the Asiatic nations and particularly the peaceful Chinese, for moral disquisitions. Hence the predominant religion of the heathens of India, the doctrine of Fo, which leads its votaries into the profoundest Solitude.

The fire of the imagination is not, however, extinguished in Asia by the effects of the climate, of indolence and of religion; those people possess abundant sensibility and the most luxuriant fancy. When favored by opportunity, the arts and sciences formerly made considerable progress in Asia. Poesy is with them a natural endowment. In their figurative languages every word has an expressive meaning: even proper names are always pictures of the objects they designate. Every passion disorders their imagination. They torment themselves to death by way of doing penance, and suicide is the effect of the most ordinary circumstance of affliction. Their superstition is madness, and their enthusiasm frenzy. Their courage, unrestrained by reflection, leads them to the commission of cruelties that are execrated by Europeans, while terror plunges them into the most deplorable imbecillity. Their crimes and enormities as far exceed our conception, as their virtues surpass our power.

wisdom is enveloped in fables and the little science they possess in mysteries. They dream waking. They tremble with superstitious fear at the menaces of their religious instructors. They secure the most beautiful part of the species with locks and bolts; and the women burn themselves for the sake of their deceased husbands. Their sensual desires are ungovernable; they are even blended with their theology and religion. They are consumed by love, ardor and desire, but they take pleasure in pain, torture and suffering. Nothing is more common in the East Indies than madness, melancholy and convulsions.

To the general causes of the powerful propensity to Solitude in warm countries, must likewise be added, their form of government. We have already seen that among the first christians it was not merely fear of persecution, or of merited punishment, not only indolence of disposition, but a real love of liberty, and desire of independence, that attracted great numbers to those celebrated deserts, where they founded a kind of republic, by means of which such dreadful evils were introduced into the world. But the heathen philosophers likewise, frequently withdrew from the oppressions of their rulers and sought an asylum in Solitude.

Pythagoras sought the retreats of Solitude, after having experienced, in the turbulent island of Samos, that disgust which tyranny excites. His precepts, refined by the enthusiasm of Plato, were in the sequel the only guide and instruction of innumerable enthusiasts. The unlimited power of the Asiatic monarchy promoted the love of Solitude still more in those unhappy countries, where the

despot is every thing and the subject nothing, where the crowned monster laughs amidst the exercise of frantic fury, and where degraded humanity is obliged to suppress its sighs. The friends of truth and virtue withdrew from such tyranny with the contempt it deserves, and beside the murmuring stream, on the lonely mountain, in the palm-tree's grateful shade, found more than all they had lost, that greatest of all blessings, Independence.

CHAP. IX.

OF THE DISADVANTAGES OF SOLITUDE.

IT has already been shewn that all the motives for Solitude are not consistent with the cool dictates of deliberate reason. Neither are they compatible with the disposition of the mind that wishes to glide smoothly down the current of tranquil life. The ordinary seclusions from the world are productive of some disadvantages, but in every species of total Solitude they are innumerable. All the failings of the recluse are, however, not to be attributed to retirement. Besides many other causes nature has implanted original defects in every constitution, and Solitude is the more prejudicial, the less care has been previously taken to subdue vicious inclinations and propensities. An attentive and serious examination of all these circumstances will convince us of the actual benefits and advantages of Solitude; it is absolutely necessary to enable us to decide in what cases it is prejudicial, and when it is productive of good effects. We must enquire, by what means Solitude affords satisfaction equal to that derived from the converse with society, and under what circumstances and with what views it is prudent for man to avoid his fellow-creatures. An interruption of the ordinary intercourse with the world may be detrimental; but on the contrary a judicious and

well regulated retirement is of infinite service, not indeed to all indiscriminately, but to the majority of mankind. To have been silent upon the disadvantages of retirement and to have dwelt only on the virtues which it cherishes, would have been a far more agreeable task, if like others, I intended only to write a romance upon Solitude.

Man, in a state of solitary indolence, is like stagnant water, which soon becomes putrid and corrupted. Indolent repose is as fatal as excessive exertion both to soul and body. As every member of the human body droops and decays under the fatigue of unremitted labor, so every faculty of the mind is debilitated by confinement to the same objects, the same occupations, without intermission or relaxation. Solitude is oppressive to every one who from bodily infirmity, cannot, for any length of time, find employment by himself. He is exhausted with every exertion to which he is not excited by duty or passion ; and, depressed by gloomy melancholy, the last spark of his genius expires in anti-social and indolent retirement. The society of the virtuous and the good is the only remedy, to restore such a mind to the relish for active Solitude and the enjoyment of itself.

Without variety and recreation the mind of the recluse loses its elasticity, if it possess not sufficient energy for long continued activity. His ideas become rigid and inflexible. He adheres to his own notions and opinions with obstinate pertinacity and despises those of others. At length he esteems no object but himself. The promiscuous intercourse with mankind improves the character and refines the manners ; if, in his intercourse with the world, a

man have been accustomed to contradiction, and the society of those who think differently from himself.

A dangerous error into which the votaries of Solitude frequently fall, is that they form too high an opinion of themselves. How often persons of rank and fortune who reside continually in the country, acquire such a petulance of disposition, such rudeness of manner and such obstinacy in all their transactions, that it is almost impossible to maintain any connection with them! Pride and obstinacy, says Plato, are the inevitable consequences of Solitude; and this it is easy to account for, as the man who is buried in solitary retirement and lives for himself alone, is not desirous of giving pleasure to any other, if he can only please himself. He imagines that he can do whatever he will, because his vassals and domestics are obedient to all his commands.

Solitude is sometimes productive of prejudicial effects even among men of letters, many of whom live in total seclusion, or mix so little with society, that when they leave their study they are quite out of their element. Their life resembles, in some measure, that in monastic institutions, and it is not surprising that they should even catch something of their spirit and manner. It will scarcely be credited, but it is not the less true, that from the pulpit, and in one of the most celebrated cities in Germany, scholars in general were, in the most earnest and impressive manner, exhorted to guard against the usual defects of their profession; against that unsocial reserve, that enmity to mankind, that contempt of every thing beyond the limits of their immediate circle or the range of their occupations. The

preacher admonishes them not to be proud or imperious, to treat their fellow-citizens with kindness and affability, to listen to them with politeness, to bear with their ignorance, to regard their errors with lenity; not to ridicule but to instruct; not to pronounce their opinions upon every subject and particularly without sufficient foundation. He entreats them to reduce their conversation and subjects of discourse to a level with the understandings of their auditors; to listen with patience to every sober argument; to learn of the illiterate with the same pleasure as they themselves instruct others, but upon no account to despise the ideas, the advantanges and useful employments of other men.

Seclusion from society frequently makes the learned man a person of high importance, in his own estimation, and for the same reason others entertain of him a directly contrary opinion. In their limited society many acquire such overweening confidence in themselves that they are absolutely incapable of moderating or concealing it.

Plato was perfectly free from this vice. A foreigner undertook a long journey to gratify his curiosity with a sight of this distinguished philosopher; but how great was his astonishment, when he was told that the affable and unaffected stranger with whom he had several times conversed in company, without discovering any thing extraordinary in his character, was Plato! Thus Plato was not less exempt from the pernicious effects of Solitude, than two celebrated German philosophers of the present day, the sublime Mendelssohn and the amiable Garve.

Anecdote of Nicole.

The polite world certainly require too much of men of studious habits, and thus repress that desire to please, which of itself frequently leads them into disgrace. It has been observed with equal truth and sagacity, that men who have devoted themselves to the pursuits of literature or science, cannot be expected to possess such vivacity and such polished manners, to take such interest in passing occurrences as those who live in the sphere of fashionable gaiety, who participate in social pleasures and amusements. It was therefore cruel in the courtiers of Christina of Sweden, to divert themselves with the extreme embarrassment of Meibom and Naude, who had written on the music and dancing of the ancients, when the queen, before her whole court, desired one of them to dance and the other to sing.

It was cruel in the French to ridicule the mistake of the celebrated mathematician, Nicole, when invited to dinner by a lady at Paris, on account of his great knowledge of the science of curves. Nicole had never partaken of such an excellent entertainment. On taking leave, he thanked the lady a thousand times, and assured her, that he should never cease to admire her beautiful little eyes. "That was a stupid compliment from such a great mathematician," said a friend to him, as they were going down stairs. "Then," replied Nicole, "I will immediately make amends for it." He instantly returned to the lady, before his friend could stop him, humbly implored her pardon, and supposing that a fine lady could not endure the imputation of any kind of littleness, he protested, he had never seen such fine large eyes, such a fine large nose, such a fine large mouth, or such a fine large foot.

The studious man, indeed, enters into society as into a country with whose manners and customs he is utterly unacquainted. Many there are, who, convinced that they cannot appear to advantage in the busy walks of life, never emerge from their retirement. Others feel reluctant to encounter the insolence and contempt of the ignorant, which men of learning so frequently experience in the promiscuous intercourse with mankind; while others, again, find the world as disagreeable to them as they are to the world. Many soon perceive how seldom the assemblies of the gay contain persons capable of reflection, and how unwelcome are the observations of a sensible mind, in the midst of their tumultuous pleasures. These, while they endeavour to acquire habits foreign from their disposition, and with which they never can render themselves familiar, are exposed to the ridicule of the giddy and of the ignorant; and deterred by their sneers, gladly shrink back into their former retirement.

For these reasons, many men, distinguished by knowledge and talents, which they might otherwise employ to the advantage of mankind, forego the benefits that may be derived from society; but in this they are wrong. Their literary attainments cannot supply the knowledge of men and manners; at least, they are not capable of inspiring that taste for moral observation, which is always acquired in the world, and which invariably produces the desire to study mankind, however small may be the pleasure usually derived from the knowledge of our fellow-creatures. The greatest moralists formed their minds in the converse with

society, and from actual experience obtained an acquaintance with the virtues and vices, the follies, frailties and passions of mankind.

The intercourse with society is an inexhaustible source of new ideas. It imparts to the mind that character, and to the manners that flexibility, pliancy and energy, by which things that appeared impossible are accomplished, by which the heart is captivated and the mind convinced. Many men of learning and talents wish to illumine mankind from the obscurity of Solitude, and know not how to produce the desired effect. They wish to attract, and, on the contrary, they repel. I allow a writer, if he is able, whenever it is fit and expedient, to throw the public into convulsions by useful and innocent truths; but he ought likewise to possess the art of maintaining a social, peaceful, tranquil, and friendly intercourse with the very persons on whom his works have so powerfully operated, and whose violent indignation they did not fail to excite.

When men of learning take supreme delight in the discovery of truth, they generally pursue, with ardor, that path which promises the greatest success. The secluded life, the consequence of this desire, has something so particularly fascinating, so superior to all ordinary pleasures, that it is difficult for such a character to tear himself from it. If he goes into society, if he accepts an invitation to dinner, if he appears at public diversions, it is a secret sacrifice to circumstances and considerations which have no real influence upon his felicity. A certain sublimity of soul and sentiments renders such men perfectly indifferent to what is denominated fortune. Their lofty spirit commonly prevents them from taking

the necessary measures to ensure a victory over their rivals, and to assist their own progress towards the goal of worldly happiness. To procure the favors of fortune, we must cultivate those sciences which are connected with the most pressing necessities of mankind, and even then we run the risk of giving offence to those among whom we live. On the contrary, in many a country, the man of the profoundest learning and of the highest talents, the most acute philosopher, moralist and politician, grows grey in his garret before he is called forth from his retirement into active life.

I have frequently considered how it happens, that persons of this description, though they possess the most amiable disposition, are endowed with every possible talent for pleasing and shining in the world, and abilities which fit them for the highest stations, notwithstanding all the literary reputation they have acquired, conclude a life fertile in projects, but unfavored by fortune, in solitary obscurity, without place, pension or preferment.

This, in some measure, indeed, depends on the country in which they live. I know of no such unfortunate men of merit in Germany, where literary talents are justly appreciated by those in power. In Switzerland, however, the most shining abilities are no recommendation to a person, excepting his aristocratic birth has made him a senator or a bailiff, while still squalling in his cradle, or if he is not so fortunate as to obtain some paltry office through the favor of several hundreds or thousands of individuals of every condition, temper and disposition, either with honor or by fawning submission. Those, in particular, who have devoted their attention to poli-

tics, are more likely, in Switzerland, to be expelled the country, than to obtain preferment.*

But this is not all. Learning, philosophy and Solitude appear to me to co-operate in producing a disadvantageous effect of a very different kind, which perhaps affords a just solution of the problem. It is commonly supposed that you pay a high compliment to a medical man, if you call him a *philosophic physician.* What would a military officer say to the compliment, if he were told that he possessed all the qualifications for a *philosophic general?*

There lies the point. That acuteness, which, in the great world, assists every man in the delicate, dangerous and embarrassing circumstances of life, is not philosophy. It is not that cool examination, that gradual developement of the ideas, that state of doubt and uncertainty, that cautious hesitation to which the greatest philosophers are so much used in Solitude. In the world, on the contrary, it is necessary to be prompt and rapid, pliant, yet firm, confident, bold and undaunted. Though this method, in my opinion, leads to innumerable errors which the philosopher avoids, yet it is the best, the surest, the only way to prosperity and success on the busy theatre of active life.

To this end we are led not by Solitude, but by the intercourse with men in every variety of circumstances and situations. Therefore, as Bacon justly

* According to the fundamental laws of the republic of Zurich, all correspondence relative to the constitution of that canton, though carried on only with private individuals in foreign countries, is high-treason.

observes, "books never teach the use of books."* To acquire a thorough knowledge of mankind, it is necessary to observe their actions, to be personally engaged in the active scenes of life, and to purchase our small portion of experience at a dear rate. It is however, a considerable advantage, if a philosopher acquire, in the world, that good humor which is so easily lost in Solitude, but which in society is capable of procuring a fool the love and a villain the regard of those with whom they associate. But if a philosopher gained no other advantage in the world, than merely the lesson which is taught by its vices and its frailties, he would, even in that case, be abundantly compensated for the disgust they naturally excite.

But he will assuredly make an acquisition of greater importance; he will learn to bear with mankind and they with him. If, like Socrates or Wieland he possess the art of extracting from Philosophy whatever she contains of kindness and indulgence, re-

* A professor, without any of the prejudices of his station, a man to whom all the youth of Germany should repair to learn philosophy, professor Hissman of Göttingen, in his Essay on the Life of Baron von Leibnitz, says: "The walls of the study are not the limits of the world, nor are all the ideas of great men recorded in books. Many observations and reflections, and those which in certain circumstances are the most important, are not committed to writing. The cultivation of the mind is, therefore, begun in the study, by reading and contemplation. It is continued and perfected, by the intercourse with mankind by an acquaintance with their sentiments, their prejudices, their wisdom and their folly. Thus Socrates, after he had read all the best works of the poets and philosophers, learned the art of speaking of Aspasia and the art of love of Diotima."

jecting all that is harsh and disagreeable, he renders that pleasing which was before anti-social and repulsive: he tears from her the terrific mask, and exhibits her beaming with the refulgence of native beauty. A celebrated German writer in his masterly essay on the life of Franklin says: "Franklin's manner never exhibits the parade of erudition, nor wears the air of a compendium. His writings consist of detached observations, with the circumstances that produced them related in a pleasing manner; short sentences, brief essays, amusing letters to friends or female acquaintances. The interest they excite is such, that we are never fatigued, and we find as great a variety in the manner of representing circumstances, as in the circumstances themselves. The accomplished talents of a man of the world, combined with the engaging simplicity of the unaffected philosopher, are conspicuous in every part of Franklin's writings."

Cato the censor, though a grave man, was free from pedantry; his affability gained him the love of his fellow-citizens; he thought that fools contributed to the instruction of the wise, more frequently than they received instruction from the latter; for it is generally acknowledged that the philosopher avoids the example of fools, with the same industry that they endeavour to escape from the intrusion of his precepts. "Proud men and idiots," says the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, "speak before they think, and towards these the philosopher Sextus taught me to exercise forbearance."

This amiable spirit of forbearance is the means of establishing an intercourse between the most enlightened genius, and men, whose minds are ob-

scured by the clouds of ignorance. The former sows in Solitude the seeds of his knowledge, but it is in society that he gathers the fruit. There no difficulty, however great, was capable of damping his ardor in the pursuit of knowledge; here no recess of the human heart is too profound for him to penetrate. In Solitude his manners were repulsive; in his intercourse with the world they are polished and engaging. In vain would Socrates have called down wisdom from heaven, if he had not possessed those amiable qualities, by which his conduct, in every circumstance, was so eminently distinguished. The moralist will always gain our love as soon as he ceases to be the object of our fear. "All for love," says Göthe; and all who have seen him must have observed, how he conceals the powers of his mighty mind beneath the vivacity of his conversation, and the important occupations of his solitary hours under the indearing attentions of friendship.

To treat others with openness, candor and confidence, is the infallible method of gaining their love. There is no situation in life, in which the advice, assistance and support of our fellow-men are not necessary to our welfare. But how can he expect the love of any person, who demands that confidence of others which he withholds from all; who feels a pang at every word that he utters, every sentiment, that escapes from his bosom, every look, every attitude, that betrays the state of his mind; whose anti-social silence and inflexible reserve prevent that reciprocity of confidence and affection, which would otherwise subsist between him and all good men.

The ability to unbosom our hearts to others, when

we please, is productive of real and permanent satisfaction. Be reserved towards no man and you will experience reserve from none. All the paltry praises of the world, all its contemptible honors and empty acclamations, cannot impart a pleasure equal to that derived from the thought: "I have gained the confidence of that unfortunate person; this dejected mind I have filled with encouraging hopes; into that wounded heart I have poured the balm of consolation." But, to perform these pleasing offices, we must possess the art of winning the affections; an art, which, amidst the severe pursuits of studious retirement, the learned are very liable to forget. By such ideas, and by such an employment of our faculties, our sentiments and moral feelings are infinitely more improved, than by the most abstruse researches, by exploring paths hitherto unknown in the dry and sterile regions of science, or by the pedantic ambition which animated a German professor, who wrote a large volume to prove that Latin is the only language spoken in heaven.

Whoever carries with him, into society, only those sentiments which elevate his soul in Solitude, will never gain the affections of men. Such sentiments impart to the mind a confidence in its own powers; they fill us with courage, but they likewise fill us with pride.

The man who entertains an affection only for those who always listen to him with apparent satisfaction, applaud his genius, and never contradict his opinion, is utterly unworthy of regard. How many characters, distinguished by their talents, how many authors of high celebrity, overflow with

philanthropy and glow with benevolent sensibility, as long as they are not called upon to exert those amiable qualities, and yet regard, with obdurate apathy, the distresses of friends sincerely attached to them, merely because the latter oppose the wild and visionary systems which themselves have adopted! Those pitiful pedants, who always carry their compositions in their pockets, or produce complimentary letters which they are anxious to read, in order to extort your tribute of applause, excite universal disgust by this ridiculous display of their vanity. Renounce, therefore, this false ambition, whose sole aim is the gratification of childish vanity, and which, when you have attained the summit of your wishes, tends only to render you an object of envy to others, who are ever ready to injure your reputation; in a word, while you excite the admiration of all, you obtain the affection of none.

But a life of studious retirement likewise affords a view equally noble and sublime. The invidious pedant alone languishes in the Solitude of his study, consumed with spleen, a prey to petulance and vexation. But happy and honorable is the life of a literary character, who envies no man, and regards the world, which he instructs, with love and esteem; who, amidst the sublime tranquillity with which he is surrounded, possessing true, internal greatness, needs not the medium of literary warfare to display his talents and to acquire celebrity; the energies of whose mind are never relaxed; the powers of whose imagination are never exhausted; who, happy in himself, can withdraw from all the pleasures of society, is constantly increasing his store of knowledge and multiplying his ideas, and who possesses

sufficient perseverance to execute whatever he undertakes.

Characters of this description are not rare, and their example proves that no general objections ought to be advanced against a studious life. This kind of seclusion may, indeed, be productive of some singularities and disagreeable habits. It frequently proves detrimental to those who, without the impulse of some noble passion, employ themselves night and day, in the incessant contemplation of a single object. Nor is it always the school of polished manners, sometimes estranging its votaries from the habits of social life, to such a degree that, to their inferiors, their conduct displays the height of arrogance, while to their superiors they descend to the lowest depth of servility.

These, however, are not the only objections to Solitude. Others, of far greater importance, arise from its prejudicial effects upon the imagination and passions which appear to deserve a closer and more minute investigation.

CHAP. X.

OF THE PREJUDICIAL EFFECTS OF SOLITUDE UPON THE IMAGINATION.

MEN of extraordinary characters withdrawing from society into the cheerless gloom of retirement, have lived under mortifications of every kind, in dreary and savage deserts, have eaten grass with the beasts of the field, have sometimes totally renounced the attributes of human nature, till at length their distempered imaginations have swarmed with the most frantic visions.

I once entered the sanctuary of the majestic church at Ensiedlen in Switzerland, where, in the midst of a black and gloomy chapel, I saw the mother of God lighted by numerous lamps, and read the sublime inscriptions in flaming letters over my head. When I reflected on the curse pronounced against all the heretics who disbelieve the miracles performed at that place, and stood there insulated and condemned amidst the multitude of pious christians prostrate on the ground, shuddering with holy awe and praying with unaffected fervor, I felt the same sensations as I sometimes do, when my imagination transports me into the profound silence and sublime seclusion of the Egyptian deserts, and into the dark cells of devout anachorets.

In the first moments of astonishment whatever is extraordinary makes a deep and irresistible impression. All these delusive images vanish, before the cool investigations of reason, when she explains the nature of these appearances and explores the cause of their effect. Every thing is then reduced to its proper standard.

Solitude powerfully affects the imagination, because the influence of the latter, upon mankind, is infinitely greater than the power of reason. Reason is the faculty of representing real objects distinctly; a warm imagination, on the contrary, sees a multitude of objects, that disappear before the penetrating eye and cool investigation of impartial reason. The imagination like the memory repeats ideas, but it modifies, augments, weakens and confounds them. This alteration, partly of the ideas themselves, and partly in their combinations, is by philosophers denominated fancy.

But fancy, enthusiasm and fanaticism are not the offspring of Solitude alone. In every condition of life there are abundance of ways leading to wisdom and folly, and multitudes, alas! pursue the road towards both. A few general observations on these phenomena of the human mind will shew which are the effects of the imagination that I conceive to be prejudicial, and how far it is perverted in Solitude by extravagance, fanaticism, frenzy and various diseases of the mind.

Imagination is said to be repeated sensation; but I am convinced that it frequently consists in false inferences drawn from real sensations. The imagination receives impressions with extreme rapidity, and considers objects as real, before it can observe

them distinctly. It reciprocally acts, and is acted upon, by every object. It invents images, which it combines with the ideas, and imparts to every thing coloring and expression. Wieland says admirably: "Enthusiasm is the life, fanaticism the destruction of the imagination."

Enthusiasm and fanaticism arise from a thousand causes, but in no situation sooner than in Solitude. Enthusiasm is a lively and powerful effervescence of the mind, elevated by the consideration of some object, which, by its novelty and truth, operates forcibly upon the reason, and prompts men to extraordinary and unexpected exertions. The mind, when inspired by enthusiasm, does not deviate from the path of reason, but only soars above the beaten track of life. The enthusiast, therefore, is misunderstood by men of colder imaginations; he is ridiculed by the witty, despised by the stupid, and regarded with astonishment by the ignorant. Enthusiasm acquires its full power, when a man disregards every obstacle, or forcibly breaks through every restraint. Hence such persons are said to be inspired; that is, inflamed by the presence, and supported by the power of a superior Being. From this energy, is derived every thing that is sublime in the character and productions of man. Lord Shaftesbury says: "A noble enthusiasm begets heroes and poets, orators, musicians, and philosophers, and every thing elevated and transcendant, that any of these is capable of producing."

All those, who are not chained to the duties of public life, would be enamored of Solitude, would retire to the tranquil shade, the smiling valley, the limpid spring or the mountain's craggy brow, if

they could believe that Solitude would impart such sensations, would inspire them with such energy.

The fanatic is as much elevated and inspired by specious illusions, as the enthusiast by truth. He believes in the reality of the images which his fancy presents; full of gigantic hopes, he awaits the future, sees objects that no other can perceive, and grasps at the visionary shadows of his own creation. He hears the voices of communicative spirits, he is favored with divine revelations, he beholds miracles, and performs them. In the extacy of his enthusiasm, the dread of obstacles, that otherwise fetter the mind, and prevent the exertion of its energies, is dissipated. Fanatics possess an uncontrolable power, unawed by precepts either human or divine.

The powerful and dangerous influence of fanaticism has frequently been experienced in various ways, in the world as well as in Solitude, and can never be guarded against with too much caution. Every bold and powerful character, capable of directing the opinions of the multitude, is, in my opinion, a dangerous man, if he is possessed by fanaticism. Profligacy is but too frequently concealed beneath an affected zeal for religion. Lord George Gordon acquired a formidable ascendancy over the minds of his countrymen, not merely because he ceased to use powder, and wore his hair cropped, but because he suddenly assumed the external appearance of a rigid presbyterian. All the religious zealots in Scotland instantly regarded the youthful fanatic as a saint, and he was elected the president of all the Protestant Associations. In parliament,

he declaimed both against the Ministry and the Opposition, and frequently displayed considerable wit. At length, in the year 1780, he acted the part by which he became so notorious. But the deluded populace were certainly ignorant, that their leader, while his pretended zeal in the cause of religion had rendered the metropolis a scene of conflagration, murder and destruction, regularly indulged his celestial inclinations in nocturnal visits to a professed prostitute.*

The smallest spark of fanaticism is dangerous, even to the most sensible mind, if not timely and fortunately extinguished by a life of active and useful exertion. Of this truth the history of the celebrated Dr. Fothergill affords a remarkable example. This physician, who died at London in the year 1780, probably owed all his talents to his profession, which obliged him to maintain an intercourse with a variety of characters. Fothergill certainly possessed the heroic spirit of self-denial; for, a few years before his death, he acknowledged to one of his friends, that, like Sir Isaac Newton, he had during his whole life been a stranger to women. Though a quaker, no part of his conduct in society betrayed the least inclination to fanaticism. While a student at Edinburgh he was distinguished by the regularity, modesty, sobriety, and sedateness of his character. None entertained the most distant idea that he was an enthusiast, and yet,

* At that critical period every action and movement of Lord George Gordon was, as might naturally be expected, narrowly observed, and it was found that he passed several hours every night in the company of Lady Grosvenor.

for reasons which could never be discovered, either at that time or since, he one day had the extravagant fancy, to run naked through one of the principal streets of Edinburgh, and, in a fit of religious phrenzy, to denounce the vengeance of heaven against all the inhabitants of that city.

Somewhat similar was the conduct of St. Francis of Assisi, whose phrenzy continued during his whole life, while that of Fothergill lasted but a day. Weary of a life of lewdness and debauchery, Francis, during a fit of sickness, was suddenly filled with apprehensions on the subject of eternity and a future state. Like Fothergill, he took it into his head to walk through the streets of Assisi in a tattered garment, half naked and barefoot, to inure himself, as he says, to the ridicule and contempt of the children of the world. His father very justly concluded, that his son's conduct proceeded from a derangement of his intellects. He therefore resolved to confine him; Francis however escaped, and sought refuge with the bishop of the town. The bishop sent for his father, who began to remonstrate with the youth, when Francis, stripping himself of his rags, threw them at his father's feet, saying: "This garment was your's, take it back; you were my earthly father, henceforth I acknowledge no father but him who is in heaven." Delighted with this declaration of the naked fanatic, the bishop threw over him his own cloak, exhorting him to persevere in his pious resolutions. Francis, hereupon, abandoned the town, retiring to the depth of the forest, where he occupied himself in prayer and exercises of devotion. Had this saint been engaged in active pursuits, like Fothergill, he

would have acquired less celebrity, but might have become infinitely more useful to society; or, had Fothergill, like Francis, lived in seclusion from the world, and among a people equally superstitious, he might have obtained the honors of canonisation, and the same silly admiration, as the mad founder of the Order of Franciscans.

These instances will suffice to shew the general effects of fanaticism. I shall now confine myself to the consideration of that species of extravagance, which is engendered in Solitude.

The dangers of seclusion are equally great to the man of talents and genius, and to the ignorant and illiterate; if, resigning themselves entirely to gloomy images, presented by their imagination, they cautiously avoid every thing capable of diverting their attention, and thus affording them relief. The learned Abbé Molanus of Hanover, fancied, during the latter years of his life, that he was a barley-corn. At the same time, he conversed on every subject in the most rational manner, with those who visited him, but could never be persuaded to stir out of his house, for fear he should be devoured by the fowls.*

* If any farther example were wanting, of the deplorable situation to which ill-health and a gloomy imagination can reduce men of the highest talents and the brightest intellect, the author of this work might himself be mentioned. In the concluding period of his life, he was unable to divest himself of the idea, that all his domestic comforts and enjoyments would be destroyed, and that he himself would fall a sacrifice to the vengeance and rapacity of the French, who then threatened Hanover with an invasion. His ideas assumed a different direction before his death, when the

Susceptibility of the female imagination.

The imaginations of women are more susceptible than those of the other sex; and therefore, in a life of rigid Solitude, they are capable of every species of extravagance. For this reason, in a convent, or any other institution of a similar nature, the nervous affections of an individual are so easily and so rapidly communicated to all. In a medical work of repute I have read, that, in a very large nunnery in France, one of the sisters took it into her head to mew like a cat; soon afterwards several others imitated her in this strange habit. At length all the nuns of the convent joined every day, at a particular time, in a general mewing which lasted several hours. The whole neighbourhood heard, with equal concern and astonishment, the daily return of this delightful concert, which did not cease till the nuns were assured, that government had stationed a company of soldiers at the gate of the monastery, with orders to inflict upon them a disgraceful punishment, on any future repetition of their feline symphony.

But, among all the epidemic extravagances of the sex which I have myself observed, or which are recorded in history, none equals the fancy that, according to Cardan, appeared in the fifteenth century. In a German convent a nun was seized with a strange impulse to bite all her sisters, and in a short time the same disposition infected the whole community. The report of this female

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impression, that he was reduced to the lowest state of poverty, prevented him from taking that nourishment which nature required, but for which he imagined himself unable to pay. (See the Life, prefixed to the first volume.) T.

mania was soon diffused, and the infectious folly was conveyed with it from convent to convent, through the greatest part of Germany, particularly Saxony and Brandenburg. It afterwards extended to the nunneries of Holland and other countries, till at length the nuns worried each other from Rome to Amsterdam.

All the senseless extravagancies of the New Platonists, a sect founded on the ruins of the doctrines of Pythagoras and Plato, were the offspring of Solitude. Their brethren, the christian monks and anachorets, were likewise bereft of their reason in their solitary retreats. Solitude is the parent of the Fakirs of India, and every other sect of mystics, to whatever religion they may belong.

The Savior of the world gave to all mankind only one rule for the conduct of their lives. But the desire of imitating the heathen, among whom they lived, produced in the minds of christians the extravagant idea, that there are two ways to a pious and holy life. For this reason the New Platonists of Alexandria formed two systems, one for ordinary men and the other for philosophers; the first were to live conformably to nature, the latter were to exalt themselves above her dictates. This philosophy taught its votaries to refrain from all sensual gratifications, to withdraw from society, to renounce every kind of pleasure, to abstain from wine and flesh, and to avoid even matrimony as a an obstacle to a holy life and the union with God. All these philosophers, therefore, sought in the tranquillity of retirement to purify the body, and to render the soul independent of its influence. By these means they hoped, even on this side of the

grave, to become united with the Deity, and after their release from the burthen of the flesh, to enjoy the felicity of heaven without that purification necessary for grosser mortals.

By the combination of these pagan and christian extravagancies, two systems of morality arose among the christians of the second century. According to the system of the indolent enthusiasts, men attained to a much higher degree of christian excellence, by mortifying the body, and thus without farther ceremony procured admission into heaven. They, therefore, enjoined abstinence from all those things which had charms for other christians, from all worldly occupations, from animal food, wine and women. They endeavored to attain to the highest moral perfection by watching, fasting and abstinence of every kind; they withdrew into deserts and wildernesses, and there expected to enjoy happiness; while, by these exercises, they released themselves entirely from the dominion of the senses. They were commonly denominated Ascetics, but were also known by the appellation of Philosophers, and were distinguished from the other christians by their dress and their whole external appearance.

Egypt was the native country and the nursery of all these preposterous doctrines. The taste of the Egyptians ever inclined towards the extravagant. The saints of that country, like artists, were more partial to the extravagant than to the beautiful. Egypt was the ancient seat of melancholy and superstition. Her priests of old produced a system replete with the greatest absurdities, by which they obscured both religion and philosophy.

This it was that made St. Anthony the legislator of the Egyptian deserts. Out of the remnants of pagan philosophy, and in consequence of a phrenzy which, like a torrent, pervaded that superstitious nation, arose the christian monks and anachorets. There was, notwithstanding, a striking difference between the philosophy of Pythagoras and that of the monks. Pythagoras had no intention of tormenting the body, but only of rendering it subservient to the mind: the monks, on the contrary, laid the greatest stress on voluntary mortification of the body, conceiving that to be the mean of attaining the highest degree of perfection. In order to unite their souls with God and to render themselves worthy of heaven, the enthusiastic followers of St. Anthony imagined that nothing more was necessary, than to lead the life of recluses.

The whole eastern world resounded with the doctrine of these frantic enthusiasts. Its votaries, throwing aside their clothes as superfluities, renounced the duties and relations of social life, dismissed their domestics, and plunged into poverty, misery, and distress.

These principles acted with irrisistible power on the imagination in Solitude. Amidst continual seclusion, amidst penury and wretchedness, this phrenzy was but aggravated; a pale and haggard look was considered as becoming a monk, an emaciated body was thought to be a passport to heaven, and fasting the best antidote against vicious ideas. Jerome, speaking of St. Paula, declares, that her virtues exceeded all human conception. Paula, indeed, ate ashes like bread. Excepting on festivals, she scarcely indulged herself in the use of

oil, and this from no other motive than as a safeguard to her chastity.

This monastic diet, originated partly from the regulations given by the Almighty to the Jews, partly from mistaken notions of the doctrine of Christ, and partly from a misconstruction of the precepts of Pythagoras; but it appears that, in Solitude, every rule for the conduct of life was strained and distorted.

Pythagoras enjoined his solitary disciples a very rational diet, both for the body and mind. He judged that they would be better fitted for contemplation, if mental exertions were succeeded by bodily exercise, as running, wrestling, and dancing; and in these hours of recreation, he even allowed them to converse either with strangers or each other. The successors of Pythagoras among the Brachmans of India likewise lived on vegetable food, and beneath their burning sky abstained from the use of flesh. The Therapeutæ, who, on many accounts, are entitled to respect, made it an invariable rule, not to take any nourishment till after sun-set; at the same time they implored the Almighty to deliver their souls from all dependence on earthly objects, that they might be the better qualified to prosecute their search of truth. The Indian and Mohammedan legislators, in all their regulations whether civil or religious, were attentive to the climate and the consequent necessity of a spare and simple diet.

But men, abandoned in their deserts, to the illusions of a heated imagination, always carried these precepts to excess. Hunger was their life and their delight. By fasting the pretended Pythago-

reans and New Platonists sought to obtain a closer communion with the Deity, and to release their souls from the shackles of the body. Among the Egyptian Therapeutæ were some, who were so filled with wisdom, that they could live six days without any nourishment. All those christians, who adopted the Pythagorean and New Platonic doctrines relative to the art of subduing the passions, propensities, and even wants of nature, fasted in their Solitude till they actually lost their senses. To endure thirst was likewise thought to be so meritorious, that when a disciple of the great Macarius, who was near fainting with thirst in the scorching noon-tide heat, once implored the refreshment of a drop of water, the saint very laconically replied: "Go into the shade!"

To the same extremities of hunger and thirst, the Enkratites, in Syria, subjected themselves, and the practice became prevalent in the fourth century among all the monks, as they were then denominated. Their motives for these mortifications were, to approach near to God, and to merit heaven. Among the Indian recluses fasting is held to be highly meritorious; and it is well known that hunger vitiates the juices, and produces not only dangerous fevers, but absolute insanity. Thus the essence of every doctrine evaporated in Solitude, because it overheated and deranged the imagination; and thus, even among the christian recluses, all the principles of reason and religion were converted into folly and fanaticism.

Every other method of crucifying and tormenting the flesh and subduing dangerous passions, which the frantic imaginations of these recluses in-

troduced into the system of monastic morality, was likewise the offspring of Solitude.

The pretended Pythagoreans and New Platonists regarded the mortification and the tormenting of the body as a step towards communion with God. Buoyed by this flattering hope, the christian Ascetics, with real pleasure, subjected their detested bodies to every species of pain and wretchedness. Some even went so far as to mutilate their persons, and St. Jerome himself exhorted the monks and anachorets to cut off every limb which offended them. The fanatics in the deserts of Thebais either condemned themselves to perpetual confinement in deep caves, or throwing away their clothes, roved about naked with the beasts of the field. All the reveries of insanity at that time passed for divine inspirations. The habitations of most of the Egyptian monks were a terrestrial purgatory, and he was supposed to possess the greatest virtue, who subjected himself to the highest degree of corporeal suffering.

Moses, an Egyptian abbot, to impress on his disciples the doctrine of self-mortification, threw his mantle upon the ground, stamped upon it with his feet and said, that he who would not suffer his body to be treated in the same manner, was not worthy to be called a monk. The abbot Arsenius maintained a continual stench in his cell with putrid palm-leaves, under the idea that thus men might escape the more intolerable stench of hell. The great Hilarion lived, from his sixteenth till his twentieth year, in a small hut covered with reeds. He then constructed a cell, in which he could not stand erect; it was only four feet in breadth and

five in height, and resembled a grave, rather than a human habitation; here, however, he remained till his death. Dorotheus concealed himself sixty years in a rock. John, the Seer, continued standing three successive years, at the foot of a rock in the Egyptian deserts, incessantly employed in prayer, and without ever sitting or lying, till his legs became ulcerated. Macarius, of Alexandria, sat, during the whole season of Lent, in the profound darkness of a narrow cell, situated on a mountain; and his ordinary habitation was not sufficiently spacious to permit him to extend his limbs. In this cell being once bitten by a gnat, he killed the animal. His remorse, however, for having given way to the impulse of his passion, was so great, that he withdrew into a desert of Scythia, where he exposed himself naked for six months to the attacks of an innumerable swarm of gnats, which were as large as hornets, and completely perforated that part of his body on which the saint, like the rest of mankind, was accustomed to sit.*

The extravagancies of the whole republic of fanatics, at this period, are collected into one focus, by one of the most intelligent ecclesiastical historians, the great chancellor Mosheim, in the following words: "To live among savage beasts and to adopt their manners; to wander naked and insane, in de-

* All these melancholy stories are related by Heraclides, bishop of Bithynia, in his work entitled, *Paradisus, seu de sanctis Egypti et variorum locorum patribus.* This prelate had resided four years in the town of Anthina in Thebais, and had not only visited all the circumjacent convents, but likewise all the anachorets who lived in cells and caves among the rocks.

sert and solitary regions; to support their emaciated bodies with grass and hay; to avoid the sight and society of mankind; to remain for years together on the same spot, motionless, and exposed to all the inclemencies of the weather; to entomb themselves for life, in gloomy and narrow cells;—this constituted the essence of piety; this was the method pursued to approach in silence and Solitude to the nature of the Divinity.

The saints of those times must, therefore, have been monsters; and yet it was imagined, that they lived in constant intercourse with celestial spirits. Sulpicius Severus relates the history of one of those saints. He had been wandering in the country around Sinai nearly forty years, when a friend of Sulpicius visited those parts, without any other covering than nature had given him, and without ever approaching the habitations of men, or listening to those who sought to engage him in conversation. Five years before this period, some person had been so fortunate as to speak with him; and on being asked why he was so solicitous to shun all human society, he replied, that those, who maintained an intercourse with mankind, were not fit for the society of angels.*

* Since that time many saints of the Catholic church, both male and female, have prepared themselves for the society of angels by methods equally extraordinary. With this view, Passidea of Siena commonly lay upon a board, or upon the bare ground. Sometimes she reposed on cherry-stones, or on branches of trees. She usually went barefoot, but if she wore shoes, she made a practice of putting into them pease or even heated shot. When at prayer she kneeled upon thorns and thistles, or more frequently on

The devotees of Malabar, even at the present day, seek to please the Almighty by standing naked for months on the same spot, exposed to the beams of a vertical sun; by keeping their arms and legs so long extended in the same posture that they lose the power of motion; by walking on their hands with their feet elevated in the air; or by suffering their backs to be perforated, and being suspended to a kind of gibbet, by a cord passed through the wound. If such actions are denominated piety, and virtue, and an elevation of the soul to God in the tranquillity of retirement, the names of these Malabar saints might, with propriety, be received into our calendar, and we might prostrate ourselves before their images, to implore their intercession for us in heaven.

Such extravagant notions and such frantic ideas has Solitude produced among nations, whose characters and religion are so widely different, and in this manner it sometimes bewilders and confuses the imagination.

Most of the early christian anachorets were not impostors, but only fools who were themselves deceived by the illusions of their imaginations. Some of them were undoubtedly guilty of decep-

iron plates full of sharp projections and sometimes even on red-hot nails. She also invented a new and before unknown species of mortification. The pious Passidea hung herself up by the heels in a chimney, and then directed a fire of hay or wet straw to be made underneath her, that she might fully enjoy the pain of the thick smoke as well as of the flame, in order to subject her body to anguish the more acute, and thus render herself more worthy of the company of celestial spirits.

Belief of the oriental recluses in miracles.

tion* respecting their pretended encounters with the devil; but as there is no reason to doubt the violence of those passions, which these holy enthusiasts strove with such ardor to repress; so they might easily be led to imagine the reality of some infernal agency, when they found themselves unable to release their hearts from the influence of base desires.

It was fanaticism and an imagination heated and elevated by Solitude, which caused the Egyptian and oriental anachorets to believe that miracles might be performed through faith and supplication. They knew, indeed, that Peter had told the Jews, they would likewise receive the gifts of the holy Ghost, if they would be converted, for they were promised to them, to their children and to many of the heathen. The Almighty, doubtless, imparted them also to the immediate successors of the apostles. Though the learned are not agreed as to the period when this power ceased, though the Catholic church denies that it has ever been suspended, though Lavater maintains that every christian is still able, on certain conditions to perform wonders,† yet it should be recollected that the

* *Inepti homines,* says St. Jerome, *demonum contra se pugnantium portenta confingunt, ut apud imperitos et vulgi homines miraculum sui faciant, et exinde lucra sectentur.*

† Lavater, a man not only of original genius, but who sometimes soars almost beyond the limits of the human understanding, some years since adopted this tenet as an article of the christian faith. This gave great concern to me and all his other friends, who could not subscribe to the same doctrine. Lavater, however, and several others of imaginations equally ardent, consider it as not only completely demonstrated, but regard it as the infallible touch-

times of the anachorets, of which most miracles are recorded, were likewise the age of the most absurd

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stone of orthodox christianity. Lavater and the friends of his wonder-working theory are probably ignorant that, in 1715, a book was published at London, announcing miracles of a much more extraordinary kind, but which renders Lavater's doctrine very suspicious. The work is entitled: "An Argument proving that, according to the covenant of eternal life revealed in the scriptures, man may be translated from hence into that eternal life, without passing through death, although the human nature of Christ himself could not be thus translated till he had passed through death." The author of this strange production was John Asgill, a member of the English parliament, a man who publicly ridiculed all religion. On the very title-page he says: *Nec vanis credite verbis; aspicite en! faciatque fidem conspectus.* He very justly desires his readers not to believe him, for he maintains through the whole work, that it is a mere notion that man must die, and that if every one would but venture to do what he is able, he might, whenever he pleased, wing his flight from the world to the celestial regions without dying.

According to Lavater's principles, there certainly exist persons capable of doing whatever they please. But the rogue Asgill plainly manifests his intention in the very motto of his book, and the burlesque style of his composition. I should, therefore, wish to ask any of the adherents of Lavater's system, who may have perused Asgill's work; whether he finds any difference between the manner in which the English infidel proves, from the promises of Christ, that, through the power of faith, man may escape death; and the manner in which Lavater deduces, from similar promises, that efficacy of faith and prayer which he maintains. If no difference can be found between these two modes of demonstration, a second question arises out of the former: whether the universal experience that miracles no longer take place at Zurich or elsewhere, does not refute Lavater as unanswerably as Asgill is refuted by the self-evident and undeniable proposition that all men die.

and deplorable superstition, which every where prevailed, and reigned perhaps more despotically over the professors of christianity, than over the heathen world.

It has been justly observed by one of the greatest writers of Germany, Mr. Meiners, of Göttingen, that the saints and miracles of the christians of the first century, differed more in appearance than in reality, from those of the heathen. "The christians," says that author, "employed their angels in the same manner as the pagans their dæmons, and like them possessed their amulets, charms and spells, by which they pretended to direct, according to their pleasure, all the powers of nature and even the omnipotence of the Deity, and to compel him to alter his decrees, in compliance with their wishes."

Faith, fasting and prayer were the charms, by which the christians of the third, fourth and fifth century, strove to obtain this ascendancy over God. This was their magic, or the art, which, with some little alteration they had borrowed from the heathen, to invoke and hold in subjection superior beings, to call forth the spirits of the departed, to raise the dead, to assume every kind of form, to avert and cure every species of disorder, to torment enemies by means of evil spirits, to excite uncontrolable passions, and, with the aid of super-natural inspiration, to predict events which lay concealed in the bosom of futurity.

The most enlightened divines and the profoundest philosophers have, therefore, either regarded all the narratives of miracles, performed by the christians since the days of the apostles, as very suspi-

cious, or have rejected them entirely as impostures. The most esteemed, modern, ecclesiastical historians are of opinion that the extraordinary gifts of the holy ghost were not long imparted to mankind. Some fix their termination in the middle of the second century, others at the beginning, and others again at the end of the third. But surely those abortions of the imaginations of the Egyptian and oriental monks and anachorets, heated and deranged by Solitude and fanaticism, cannot be entitled to any credit. It was the spirit of emulation and the vain ambition of rivalling the founders of their religion, which, in the opinion of the best ecclesiastical writers, induced the monks and anachorets to claim those extraordinary faculties imparted by the apostles. The fame of so many great achievements of christian magic spread from one desert to another. At length, in the fourth century, it became a principle generally adopted in the christian church, that fiction and falsehood might be employed to promote the purposes of religion. As the writings of the most celebrated fathers of the church at this time abounded with ridiculous legends and pious impostures, so the monks and anachorets had at least a right, to maintain the reality of the miracles which existed only in their own imaginations.

It was, therefore, Solitude and their imaginations which, in reality, performed most of the miracles ascribed by the anachorets to themselves and the holy ghost. For the minds of men, condemned to rude and dreary deserts, and whose imaginations were distracted by fasting and watching, castigation and penance, barren contemplation could not furnish sufficient employment. Having few wants

their labor was of short duration, and thus, notwithstanding the best intentions, they were overtaken by indolence and its companion languor. The mind, bewildered in a labyrinth of unprofitable speculations and confused ideas, plunged into all the misery, or perhaps it may be denominated the felicity, of superstition and fanaticism. The recluse then fancied that he saw and heard many things which never existed; he imagined that he had revelations and possessed the power of performing miracles.

The arch-visionary Anthony mistook imagination for reality, when he persuaded himself, that, by means of faith and prayer, he had produced fountains of water in the desert, that he had driven out devils, endowed asses with reason, seen spirits ascending to heaven, and that in his transports he had himself been borne aloft in the air.

The great Jerome likewise confounded fiction with reality, when he fancied that he was summoned before the judgment-seat of the Almighty, and was there asked: "Who art thou?" Jerome answered that he was a christian, but received for answer: "Thou lyest, for thou art a follower of Cicero, and not of Christ." "By these words," says Jerome, "I was struck dumb. The judge of the universe ordered me to be scourged with rods. This was done; and though I supplicated with tears for mercy, the strokes were applied with such vigor, that my intreaties could scarcely be heard. At length several of those who were present prostrated themselves at the feet of my judge, and implored that I might be pardoned on account of my youth, and might be allowed time to repent, but on condition

that I should suffer a punishment much more severe, if I should ever again indulge in the sin of reading pagan authors. I swore that I would never be guilty of the crime;* the rest of my punishment was remitted and I was conveyed back to the world. It must not be supposed," continues Jerome, probably before he had recovered from his phrenzy, "that this is one of those illusions, which so often impose upon the imagination. The judgment-seat of God is my witness as well as the dreadful denunciation uttered against me. The truth of it is attested by my lacerated body, by the pains which I still feel, and by the assiduity with which I now peruse the sacred scriptures, and which is equal to my former diligence in reading the productions of the ancient Romans."

A similar illusion pervaded the imagination of St. Hilarion, in his Solitude, when he fancied that

* Jerome a thousand times violated this oath; but how could he keep an oath which he swore at the time when his imagination was so distracted in his Syrian Solitude! Ruffinus says, it is clearer than the day, that he never ceased to read heathen writers. He acknowledges himself that he had read Porphyry and other Greek authors, and this must evidently have been after his pretended conversion; for before the above-mentioned vision he did not understand Greek. He likewise employed a monk, who inhabited the same cell with Ruffinus, to copy Cicero's dialogues, for which he paid a high price. When he once went from Bethlehem to Jerusalem he entrusted his books to the care of Ruffinus, who found among them Plato's Dialogues in Greek, with a translation by Cicero. In his convent at Bethlehem he taught the Latin language, and explained Virgil, the comic and lyric poets and the heathen historians to children, who were committed to his charge by their parents, to be educated in the fear of God.

he was visited in his cell, by the most beautiful females, who assailed his virtue with wanton blandishments. From the same cause he conceived himself tempted, during his pious abstinences, by the most delicious viands; and that his prayers were interrupted by the howlings of wolves and foxes. From the same reason, he saw by moon-light, a chariot drawn by fiery horses rushing towards him, but when he pronounced the name of Jesus, the earth opened and engulphed the vehicle together with the flaming coursers.

Under the influence of the same illusion, the anachoret Copres declared, that he had remained a considerable time in the midst of a fire without being injured; and the anachoret Helenes related, that he had carried glowing coals in his mantle, which nevertheless sustained no damage, and that he rode over a river on the back of a crocodile.

The great anachoret Macarius was not less mistaken when he related, that he had revived the dead, or at least enabled them to converse with him for a considerable time; that on touching some skulls in the desert with his staff, they had related to him the events of the lives of those to whom they had belonged; that through his intercession he had restored to the human figure a female, who, by means of enchantment, had been converted into a horse; that he had personally fought with the devil; that he had seen infernal spirits, settling, like flies, on the lips of a young anachoret, during his devotions, but that an angel stood by and drove them away with a two-edged sword; that he had seen a chain of fire ascending to heaven from the mouth of another anachoret, while engaged in pious

exercises; that he had twice met the devil, the first time when going to tempt the other monks in the desert, and the second time when returning from them. On the former occasion, Satan appeared in a linen garment, full of holes, at each of which he discovered a bottle. On enquiring for what purpose he employed these bottles, the devil replied, that they only contained potions for the monks, each of whom he hoped would at least find one to his taste.

All the monks and anachorets imagined, that these prodigies were performed through the power of faith and supplication. These stories were, originally, either fictions invented for the edification of the pious, or the fancies of minds heated and bewildered by Solitude. With imaginations so distracted, they sallied forth in quest of spiritual adventures, and saw things which men of more social habits, more active lives, and less ardent minds never meet with.

The irksomeness, lassitude and manifold maladies, both of soul and body, experienced by the monks and anachorets, were indisputably the effects of Solitude. How slowly and how heavily must the time have passed away, when the climate rendered them too indolent for labor, and the sun with tedious course protracted their joyless days! Alas! who has not experienced the state, which is so accurately described, by a writer thoroughly acquainted with the Egyptian anachorets, by Cassianus, at the same time that he suggests the means, by which they may escape from its horrors.

This disposition, which is too strongly grounded in mankind in general, he denominates a loathing of

the heart and aversion to every thing. "It attacks and torments anachorets and monks," says Cassianus, "who frequently remove their residence from one place to another. Its symptoms are, abhorrence of the cloister and disgust with the cell, contempt of the brethren, reluctance to every kind of labor, continual wandering abroad, longing for distant countries, indolence, long fasting and continual restlessness." I defy any physician either of the soul or body to describe this state with greater fidelity than it is delineated by Cassianus.*

Cassianus had, from his early youth, resided in a convent at Bethlehem, and therefore knew, by experience, the feelings of the heart in monastic retirement. About the conclusion of the fourth century, he went to Egypt, and was employed seven years in visiting the anachorets and monks in the mountains of Nitria and the desert of Thebais. Disgust of life must have prevailed very generally among the Egyptian monks and anachorets, for Cassianus in his work on monastic institutions, or on the mode of life of the monks in the countries of the east, has included it among their principal vices, and warns them as earnestly to guard against its attacks as against gluttony, incontinence, anger, melancholy, vanity and pride. From these vices and maladies, for the cure of which Cassianus prescribes such wholesome rules, it may be perceived

* How particularly moving and impressive is this description given by Cassianus, of a monk oppressed by lassitude: *Sæpiusque egreditur et ingreditur cellam, et solem velut ad occasum tardius properantem crebrius intuetur.*

of what spirit the Egyptian monks and anachorets were the offspring.

In the regions of the East and in Egypt in particular, melancholy and madness were not only the causes of the inclination to Solitude, but were not rarely the effects of retirement. The imaginations of many anachorets became so disordered in their cells and their deserts, that, according to the testimony of the bishop Heraclides, it was found necessary to send them back into society to restore them to reason. The same writer says, that a monk named Valens was confined in chains a whole year by his brethren, who continually surrounded him on their knees and prayed for his recovery. St. Jerome, whose testimony cannot be doubted, declares: that there were monks, who were rendered melancholy by continual confinement in their cells, by immoderate fasting, by their disgust of Solitude, and incessant study, and who stood much more in need of medical advice than of his admonitions. In the writings of Gregory Nazianzen, there are instances of monks within his own diocese, who, merely to release themselves from the oppressive burthen of life, had recourse to famine and the halter, or precipitated themselves into profound abysses. In the pious Tillemont's history of the early periods of monachism we find examples of monks, who, on account of the irresistible temptations to which they were exposed, threw themselves from the summits of lofty rocks, ripped open their bellies, or put a period to their lives in various ways; and the same writer mentions instances of Egyptian nuns, who, in the infancy of monastic institutions, either hanged or drowned themselves.

The extravagant folly of the monks and the illusions of the anachorets naturally led to melancholy and madness. These maladies actually increased, to such a degree, among the wretched recluses of Palestine that, in the year 491, it was found necessary to erect a hospital at Jerusalem, for the unhappy victims of superstition who had lost their senses in the convents and deserts of that country. Mosheim, therefore, very justly asserts, that " the biographers of all these saints amuse their readers with nothing but fables equally astonishing and absurd, and exhibit, for our imitation, only fools and madmen. To suffer hunger and thirst, to rove about naked, to confine themselves in narrow holes and to wait with their eyes closed for the divine illumination, they regarded as the way to happiness and a holy life. The less of sound reason a person manifested, the more confidently he might hope to be honored as a saint and a demi-god."

These, however, were not all the follies, that may be regarded as the consequences of an imagination disordered by Solitude. Many solitary devotees fancied they possessed the spirit of God, or that they were completely united with the Deity, when they had entirely deprived themselves both of reason and sensibility, and were, as they denominated it, philosophically dead.

Men of this speculative disposition directed their looks towards a single object, with a view to subdue their passions, to extinguish external sensations, and to augment the energies of the soul. Those who, like St. Bernard, possessed these mental powers, could drink off oil like wine. In order to keep the soul in this sublime state, and to release it

from all its shackles, Pythagoras indeed enjoined, that it should previously be purified in various ways, and gradually elevated to the contemplation of the Eternal. As the first step he recommended the study of the mathematics. "But," says he, "every thing ultimately terminates in one point, the contemplation of the Divinity, and to this point tends every truth. The soul must, therefore, release itself from the fetters of the body, from the influence of the passions, and die philosophically. All communication between the soul and body must then cease, and thus man exalts himself to God in prayer, in Solitude and tranquillity."

To wean the soul from every kind of sensual desire, to fix the attention entirely on God, by mortification of the body, profound meditation, and rigid abstinence, was regarded by the New Platonists of the second century, as the aim of all philosophy and the highest wisdom. All the christian anachorets, and all succeeding mystics have blundered in a most extraordinary manner, into this highest degree of wisdom. Macarius of Alexandria, or as he is sometimes called, the younger, is said to have once attempted to live five days without thinking of any thing but God. He shut himself up, to prevent the intrusions of unwelcome visitors, and then addressed his soul in the following words: "Take care that thou dost not descend from heaven; thou art in the presence of angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, all the celestial powers, and of God thy Creator Descend not to mean and earthly objects." In this state of mind Macarius remained two days and two nights; but, says the legend, the devil became so exasper-

ated, that he persuaded Macarius, he was converted into a flame of fire and was consuming every thing around him; which terrified the saint to such a degree that, on the third day, he desisted from his purpose, and again turned his thoughts to terrestrial objects.

All the votaries of Solitude, heathens as well as christians, perfectly agreed in this point, that, in order to deliver the soul from the fetters of the body, and to become completely united with the Deity, it is necessary for several hours each day, to fix your eyes stedfastly and immoveably on one spot, and that, by following this method, you rise superior to corporeal wants, are assimilated with God, and enjoy inexpressible felicity.

The mystics of Hindostan denominate the Deity himself, *Achar*, the immoveable, and bewilder themselves in the most profound contemplation on *nothing* as the origin of all things. Their brethren, the Fakirs, have an order called the Order of the *Enlightened*, or the *United with God.* The history of their visions contains almost a complete history of mysticism. These devotees, having subdued all earthly desires, retire into Solitude, where they lead the life of hermits, eating what is brought them, and at other times subsisting on charity. They are so lost in contemplation, that they gaze for hours on a single point, motionless and dead to all external sensations. In this state, they assert, that they behold, with a lively and inexpressible joy, the Supreme Being, under the form of an extremely white, clear, and glorious flame.

The mystics of India and modern Egypt render themselves superior to the infirmities of nature, by

intoxicating compositions. The Egyptians prepare one of hemp-leaves and water, and, an hour after they have taken it, they become inebriated, rave and see whatever they please. Another composition, of which great quantities are imported from India into Egypt, operates on the imagination in the same manner as a life of Solitude, only much more rapidly. It first exhilarates those who take it, then makes them furious and frantic; then gloomy, despondent and dejected, afterwards weary, and inclined to sleep, till its influence subsides with repose.

But mystics may be found in almost every part of the world, without these intoxicating compositions. About the year of Christ, 304, during the reign of the emperor Hœi Ti, a sect of mystics sprung up in China. They taught the art of suspending all the energies of the senses and of the soul, and of attaining a state of complete stagnation, which they regard as that of the highest perfection. The mystics of Japan, the priests of Xaca, aspire to a profound contemplation of the mysteries of the Godhead, in which the soul is insensible to all the external impressions of the senses. Darma, one of the successors of Xaca, cut off his eye-lids, conceiving them to be obstacles to his extatic contemplations, and he is regarded as a great saint by his countrymen. In a temple in the city of Judia, in Siam, there is a colossal statue of Xaca, in the posture of religious meditation. The priests of this deity, according to the rules of their order, place themselves during their exercises of devotion, for a considerable time every day, in this posture, in which they think man ceases to be subject to the

frailties of human nature. The Malays, therefore, denominate a particular class of solitary devotees, *Saniakanen*, that is, men without blood.

Total seclusion and profound monastic tranquillity, are certainly favorable to the practice of the most elevated virtue, and perhaps to the bold idea of becoming united with the Deity. But mysticism, and all the effects it has produced in christendom since its origin, prove how powerfully the imagination contributes to the visions of its votaries, how it disorders their intellects, and extinguishes every rational idea with regard to religion.

The origin of all mysticism among the christians, and the principal cause of the solitary retirement and sacred indolence of the monks and anachorets, was (excepting some mistaken passages of scripture) the Alexandrian or New Platonic philosophy, by which its founder, Ammonius, hoped to unite the heathen and christian systems. Conformably with the principles of this school, the authors of mysticism maintained, that every human soul contained something divine, that reason was an emanation from the Deity, and by its light alone mankind ought to be guided. The first mystics denied that this divine fire could be kindled by human efforts and industry, and therefore despised all vain exertions to attain human knowledge, and every rational method of improving their understandings. They enjoined, on the contrary, Solitude, silence, inactivity, repose, and mortification of the body, hoping that the internal light would then kindle of itself. "The soul," said they, "enjoys the immediate communication with God, when all earthly concerns are banished, and the mind is secured

against the seduction of the senses. The man, thus united with God, not only enjoys bliss beyond all conception, but discovers truth in naked beauty; while those who do not participate in these sublime notions behold every object distorted and disguised.

A crazy Greek, Dionysius Areopagita, in the fourth century, carried this absurd system of the preceding age to a still higher degree of extravagance. By the propagation of his principles in Greece and Syria, he involved the human mind in universal darkness, and induced great numbers to embrace a life of Solitude. All these disciples lived in holy indolence, and imagined that, by fasting and the mortification of the flesh, they had attained their object, and united themselves with the Deity.

These enthusiasts, like those of the present times, considered themselves as having attained the highest degree of christian perfection. They collected around them, in the fifth century, many men of weak minds and shallow understandings, particularly in all the provinces of the east. In order to enjoy the sensation of their communion with God, they lived like savage beasts, or assumed the appearance of insanity. The most celebrated supporters of the doctrines of mysticism at that period, mounting upon columns, exhibited themselves, like golden calves, to the adoration of the admiring crowd.

Simeon, whose history has already been related, the revered author of this mystical extravagance, obtained, on his column in the Syrian Solitude, immortal renown. His conduct had many imitators, both in Syria and Palestine, and it was not till the

twelfth century that this senseless practice was abandoned in the east. In the western world it had no success; for the bishops destroyed the column on which a monk of Lombardy, named Vulfilaik, had planted himself, about the year 591, in the vicinity of Triers. It is not improbable that Vulfilaik's ardor was likewise repressed, on finding that he did not receive much internal illumination; for in that northern climate, this martyr of mysticism stood, in the depth of winter, barefoot on his column.

The inhabitants of the western regions now remained strangers to these extravagancies, till, in the ninth century, the emperor Michael presented Lewis the Pious, with a copy of the interpolated works of Dionysius Areopagita; which were afterwards translated by John Scotus, the celebrated philosopher at the court of Charles the Bald. They were received with the greatest avidity in the convents, and were soon diffused throughout all christendom. Since that period, innumerable solitary enthusiasts have, for a succession of ages, pretended, that all human passions were extinguished in their souls, and that they were completely united with God.

Mysticism became a resource, refreshment and consolation to many good men, at a time when the destruction of all religion was menaced by the senseless theology of the schools. Their enlightened minds could no longer find satisfaction in the doctrines of the church. For this reason, many excellent men, in the fifteenth century, had recourse to mysticism, and particularly Jerome Savanarola and Thomas a Kempis. No production has

ever been so generally read and so often reprinted, as the work of the latter, on the Imitation of Christ. Enthusiasts have declared that this book contains the quintessence of mysticism. In this celebrated performance, Kempis always places the world and God in opposition to each other, and inculcates the doctrine of self-denial, or the necessity of despising the world, shunning all intercourse with society, and avoiding every pleasure and indulgence. Modern divines of profound penetration, more desirous of serving the cause of truth than of conveying pleasing impressions, have shewn, that such was not the conduct of the Savior of the world; and still less do they approve of that part, in which he treats with such romantic sensibility, of the love to God and Jesus. In this work they discover no humane concern for the interests of mankind, no spirit of toleration, and little of philanthropy or its kindred virtues. In a word, they have thought the whole work, this master-piece of mysticism, to be so general and so obscure, that, after an attentive perusal, they were still left in the dark as to the question, in what true christianity consists.

With so little real illumination, with such mistaken notions of religion, it is natural, that, in their seclusion from the world and in solitary concealment, the minds of these enthusiasts should rush into the wildest extravagancies. From their beloved Solitude, that abundant source of so many other aberrations of the human mind, probably proceeded all the absurdities of the mystical system, all the nonsense concerning an internal sensation, incomprehensible by human reason, and implanted in the soul by a supernatural power, though

not to be discovered by the light of philosophy. Those must be profoundly penetrated with the principles of mysticism, who imagine they feel an uncommon degree of spiritual harmony, extraordinary emotions, and the influence of the Divinity operating within their souls.

These mystical absurdities naturally lead to the idea, that even in Solitude, sought from the best of motives, and in the most sublime tranquillity, the ardent desire of union with God, the supposed mystical imitation of Jesus, is nothing more than the illusion of an enthusiastic imagination.

Solitude is much more productive of visionary insanity in the minds of women, than in men. What in men is nothing more than fancy, is in the other sex augmented to frenzy; therefore Plato regarded women as the origin of all superstition and fanaticism.

That species of female fanaticism, which assumes the appearance of the most ardent love of God and of heaven, frequently arises from the disappointment of an earthly passion: hence the impure images which delirious females have mingled with ideas the most important and the most sublime. But how should they be aware, that it is almost impossible to speak in proper terms of that awful Being, whose all-encompassing greatness we can only contemplate through the medium of his omnipotence, with whose presence we are every where surrounded, before whose wrath the earth quakes, and the heavens are dissolved! None but a perfect lunatic would presume to mingle the sacred name of the Deity, with such sensations as pro-

duced the sainted fervor of Catherine of Siena, or of the holy lunatic Armelle.

Armelle Nicolas, the most distinguished luminary of French piety, was, by birth, a peasant, and was employed in the humble offices of a domestic. Armelle was formed in seclusion; the kitchen was her sphere of action, and its furniture her only society. She had scarcely learned to speak before she derived exquisite pleasure from the repetition of an *Ave* or *Paternoster*. When she was a little older, she was occupied in tending sheep, which duty she performed with cheerfulness, and at the same time amused herself during the whole day with telling her rosary. While thus employed, she made astonishing advances in celestial love, says the Urselline Nun, from whose history of Armelle's life, I have obtained all my information; for, the the first time she beheld a crucifix, she kissed, pressed, and embraced the sacred image with fervent devotion, while tears of tenderness streamed from her eyes.

Nothing afflicted the mind of Armelle more deeply than the state of wretched souls in purgatory. All her labors, all her efforts, both during her pastoral occupation and afterwards when engaged in domestic duties, were directed solely to their deliverance from that dreadful situation. When scorched by heat, or shivering with cold, she rejoiced, for the sake of her miserable fellow-creatures in purgatory, whose torments she hoped would be somewhat alleviated by her sufferings.

But, what will appear the most extraordinary to the reader, is, that Armelle Nicolas, one of the

most distinguished characters in the annals of female sanctity, was sometimes governed by inclinations, not altogether of the purest nature. Her biographer, the Urselline nun, says: "For two whole years the heart of Armelle was destitute of the love of God; during this period her soul burned with lustful desire, and her imagination was totally absorbed by the lewdest images."

Sensual and spiritual love, are, however, branches of the same parent-stock. Sensual love is frequently converted into spiritual, and spiritual love into sensual. It is not, therefore, surprising, that it should be difficult to draw the line between them, in the mind of a youthful, ardent, and susceptible female.

Whatever may be urged against the vices and extravagancies of mysticism, can by no means affect its excellencies. What mind is not filled with soft transport, and fired with enthusiasm by the eloquence of the tender Fenelon!* The mystics of the Roman Catholic church have afforded instances of the noblest self-denial, the most unaffected humility, and the most active philanthropy. It is, however, not the less true, that almost all mystics, who embrace a life of retirement and solitary contemplation, imagine themselves favored with supernatural demonstrations of such truths, as persons of common understandings are unable to comprehend; and that, in their chambers, their kitch-

* Lord Peterborough, after his visit to the archbishop Fenelon, said to Pope: "He is a delicious creature, but I hastened away from him as fast as I could, for fear he should make a saint of me."

ens, and their cells, they resign themselves to illusions, to which no rational man can listen, and which are, in fact, nothing more than a medley of refined voluptuousness, false philosophy, and downright frenzy.

Profound melancholy and spiritual insanity peopled the Egyptian deserts, or at least, were there produced amidst voluntary torments, penance and mortification. Some enthusiasts, however, are bold enough to maintain, that St. Anthony, and all the other melancholy tenants of the almost uninhabitable dens and dreary caverns in the deserts of Thebais, were jovial companions, men of the most convivial disposition, who were distinguished for cheerfulness, gaiety, and good-humor.

It cannot, however, be denied, that, among many others, the great Macarius, that celebrated Egyptian saint, manifested a disposition highly petulant and disagreeable. It is equally true, that there were anachorets, like the younger Macarius, who maintained an appearance of cheerfulness, and by their pleasing vivacity contrived to allure youth into the snares of monastic Solitude. Hence it is probable, that all the Egyptian anachorets were not melancholy, and that many escaped the hospital erected at Jerusalem for those who were insane. Enthusiasm and fanaticism frequently operate as antidotes to melancholy. It was by their assistance that the great Anthony overcame the melancholy with which he was attacked in early life, and that his old age was accompanied by gaiety and health. Fanaticism was the cause of the extraordinary longevity of many of the Egyptian recluses: years pass like days, and the rapid career of time

brings the enjoyment of uninterrupted cheerfulness for those, who are continually favored with agreeable visions, whose fancy transports them among the angelic choirs, and to the regions of celestial bliss.

A modern example proves the efficacy of fanaticism in subduing melancholy. The celebrated Whitfield was afflicted with the horrors of religious melancholy, when he applied to Wesley, the founder of the sect of Methodists, to receive him into his society. The remedy succeeded beyond expectation; Whitfield recovered his cheerfulness, and, as is well known, became the greatest spiritual Quixotte in England.

But though I admit that many exceptions must be made, I have still left a host of witnesses and facts to prove the fallacy of the assertion, that the fanatical inhabitants of the Egyptian deserts possessed either cheerfulness, gaiety, or good-humor. That subject, however, I shall now dismiss, and shall proceed to the question: whether it is not a general principle implanted in human nature, that melancholy excites a propensity to Solitude, and whether Solitude in numerous instances does not tend to aggravate melancholy?

A love of Solitude is the most general symptom of melancholy. All melancholy persons shun the light of day and the society of men. Incapable of fixing their attention upon any other idea than that by which they are oppressed, they render their lives a continual scene of torment. This state of mind is aggravated in Solitude, unless the imagination receive some new and powerful bias. Much is effected, if a person, laboring under melancholy

despondency, can be induced to vary the object of his ideas, his wishes, and desires. He must not languish for the enjoyment of any particular pleasure, as indispensable to his happiness; he must collect his energies, and detaching himself from those considerations which plunge him into dejection, he must employ his faculties in pursuits that cheer the soul. If, in compliance with these precepts, he can be persuaded to engage in any occupation that requires the exertion of his powers, the unhappy sufferer, by these means, experiences greater relief, than from all the dissipations of the world. The disposition to melancholy can never be wholly eradicated, but, in this case, it tends only to excite him to persevere, with increased ardor, in the plan which he has adopted.

An Englishman, laboring under the pressure of melancholy, shoots himself; a Frenchman, under similar circumstances, used to turn Carthusian. The conduct of both proceeds from the same cause; the English would not destroy themselves, if there existed in that country monastic institutions.

When sickness and melancholy have extinguished the fire of the soul, we soon lose all love of society and of life, and naturally withdraw into Solitude. Nothing is so inseparable from every species of melancholy, as the desire to shun mankind, to renounce all connection with them; the determination neither to see, to converse, nor have any kind of communication with a single human creature. In this state of mind we wish to be alone as much as possible, to pursue, without interruption, those ideas, from which, on the contrary, we should strenuously endeavor to abstract ourselves. On

this account, the victim of melancholy is so frequently told, that he wants amusement, that he should frequent balls and assemblies, theatres and masquerades; or strive to banish his despondency amidst the boisterous mirth of the convivial party, or in the voluptuous embraces of a mistress.

This advice may be given with the best intentions, but the remedy is improper. A melancholy man cannot be expected to do what militates against his taste, his inclination and his judgment. False philosophy, anachoretical phrenzy and mysticism, are incapable of plunging the soul into such distraction as melancholy alone. The gloom of Egyptian darkness, fanaticism and extravagance, enveloped and obscured religion, but melancholy annihilates its beneficial and consolatory influence, rejects all the blessings bestowed by the Almighty, and poisons every source of human felicity.

Melancholy is a habit of false reasoning, which, co-operating with painful corporeal sensations, produces the most gloomy despondency in the soul, and causes us to view every object on the most unfavorable side. That man, therefore, cannot be pronounced melancholy, who seeks retirement, and avoids the distractions of society, only that he may be enabled to execute some important and laborious undertaking. If he possess sound nerves, and his attention be directed to a great and noble object, a person may, without detriment, withdraw from the intercourse with society for a considerable time; but to those of feeble constitutions and melancholy habits, Solitude soon becomes dangerous, if they are not engaged in an occupation that interests the mind, and produces a varied succession of ideas.

Melancholy produces a love of retirement.

It is a gross mistake to suppose, that dissipation is the most certain antidote to melancholy. Many on the contrary are overwhelmed with melancholy, only because they are prevented from enjoying that tranquillity and repose, which is the object of their ardent desire. How many lose all relish for society, and become disgusted with life, for no other reason, than because they cannot, for a moment, resign themselves to their own reflections in the calm of retirement! How frequently does the most gloomy despondency take possession of the mind of him, who, confined to the daily routine of the same occupations, is not directed by his own inclinations, but is obliged to obey the dictates of others! That is, undoubtedly, the proper sphere for every man, in which he is enabled to perform the most good; and, with many, Solitude is more favorable to the exercise of a benevolent disposition, than the world. Melancholy, therefore, is sometimes alleviated by seclusion, though it is much more frequently the offspring of Solitude.

A melancholy man is dejected beyond all conception, and on that account avoids the society of the frigid and unfeeling, when he has none to sympathize in his affliction, and when those around him imagine that he is gay and cheerful, while at the same time his soul is a prey to the acutest anguish. How few perceive the burthen which oppresses their neighbor, or the thorn which rankles in another's heart! As nothing appears to them more incomprehensible than the agony of a nervous malady, while it does not manifest itself by violent convulsions in the streets, so melancholy passes unobserved as long as the unhappy patient does not

blow out his brains. Though you may suffer, for many successive years, all the torments of hell, from those causes, yet the frigid souls, your unfeeling friends and acquaintance who see you every day, are convinced, that you are in excellent health.*

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* A divine, who is thoroughly acquainted with mankind, who, on that account is never guilty of injustice, never condemns the wanderers, but forgives and draws them to him by bands of love, a divine, who is both a christian and a philosopher, Mr. Zollikofer, of Leipzig, in a collection of his sermons, which men of all religions will peruse with equal edification, has the following passage: "The man of a sound and healthy constitution frequently thinks all complaints of pain and sickness exaggerated, because he has never experienced similar sensations, or because his robust frame is affected by them in a much slighter degree. But he, who has himself suffered, feels in a very different manner for the afflictions of his fellow-creatures. His soul is penetrated with grief at the sight of the tortured sufferer; he mingles his tears with those of the distressed, he feels every stroke experienced by others as acutely as if it were inflicted on himself. All the traces which his own sorrows have left in his mind are renewed and combined. They deeply affect him, and present a picture of the sufferings of his fellow-creature, which assuredly will not permit him to remain either indifferent or inactive. He who has himself borne the burthen of misfortune, feels its overwhelming weight when he hears others groaning under it, and feels an irresistible impulse, at least to alleviate, if it be not in his power entirely to remove this burthen. He who has himself experienced in affliction the sweets of the sympathy, consolation and assistance of friendship; who has felt how the heart is cheered, the prospect enlivened, and the soul inspired with new hope, when he has a friendly bosom into which he can pour his griefs, at the sensation that he is not abandoned by all, that he does not suffer alone, but that he may promise himself society and support even in the

It is possible to appear to strangers, to be animated with the highest degree of cheerfulness and vivacity, at the very moment when life is an intolerable burthen. No Harlequin that ever appeared at the Italian theatre, at Paris, obtained such unbounded applause as Carlin, who died in that capital, in the year 1778. His professional talents were unrivalled, and the display of his comic powers never failed to excite the highest degree of merriment; but, when he was not upon the stage, he was extremely pensive and reserved. One of the first physicians of Paris being consulted by a patient, who complained that he was subject to attacks of the blackest melancholy, advised him to indulge, sometimes, in scenes of mirthful gaiety and innocent amusement. "Go," said he, "to the Italian Comedy: your malady must be very obstinate if it does not yield to the magic powers of Carlin the Harlequin." "Alas!" replied the patient, "I am Carlin, and while I excite the mirth of all the world, I am myself the victim of the most gloomy despondency."

Though the society of those who are insensible to the horrors of his situation, is insufferable to the melancholy man, yet total seclusion is, in general, not less pernicious. By aversion from every

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most rugged road; he who has experienced this, O! how will he hasten to sympathize with his suffering friend and fellow-creature, to draw from him the cause of his sorrows, to listen to his complaints, and how will he endeavor to dry his tears, to convey into the gloom by which he is surrounded a ray of light, which may afford him some relief and consolation!"

kind of amusement, melancholy is commonly aggravated in Solitude. Uninterrupted reflection upon any subject that dejects the mind, an invincible attachment to some gloomy idea, converts Solitude into a baneful poison, at the very moment when we feel the strongest inclination to enjoy it. The illusions of melancholy and despondency are far more prejudicial, than all the distractions of social intercourse, which we are so anxious to shun. The converse with ourselves, in which, under such circumstances, we are always desirous to indulge, is of all things the most pernicious; impressed with a dread of mankind and aversion from society, the imagination is continually occupied with one gloomy idea, which, acquiring increased vigor, at length rules with uncontroled power in the mind.

A melancholy man becomes shy and timid, however bold and enterprising his natural character may be. He shuns every numerous assemblage of his fellow-creatures. He is offended if the sun diffuse his genial splendor, because he imagines that he is most tranquil when least observed; his gloomy mind is, therefore, never so calm as when the atmosphere is enveloped in corresponding obscurity, when the skies are deformed by the pattering rain, and the howling tempest. He dreads to go abroad, fearful of seeing or of being seen by any human creature; and never ventures out but when surrounded with the sable mantle of night. A perpetual gloom pervades his habitation, and he shudders whenever a visitor is announced. Nothing renders him more truly miserable, than when the officious kindness of his friends compels him to join the social party, or convinces him that they wish

to divert his mind. He starts as often as the door of his apartment is opened,* and an invitation to dinner is worse than death. Solitude is a poison to him, but a poison that he loves.

In the latter years of his life, Rousseau avoided the intercourse with mankind, believing that they had all conspired to disturb his repose. It is certainly not surprising that he should entertain such an idea. Exiled from Paris and Geneva, driven from Berne, and expelled from his charming, peaceful island in the lake of Biel, Rousseau was justified in forming an unfavorable opinion of mankind. Melancholy and hypochondria had, from his early youth, been implanted in his mind and constitution. He had suffered excruciating agonies from disease. Malice and envy exulted in his misfortunes, when bending beneath the pressure of poverty and pain. He was persecuted as a freethinker, and his religious opinions were execrated in places where Voltaire was adored, and where atheism was regarded as the test of genius. Now, too, when his spirit reposes in the abodes of everlasting peace, he is condemned for no other reason than because he has acquired too great celebrity. He is pronounced a madman or perhaps a sublime fool, but no allowance is made for his infirm con-

* The late professor Lichtenberg of Göttingen, whose disposition to melancholy was very strong, says: "The house in which I lived had an old wooden stair-case. I learned to distinguish the sound and tone of every stair, and likewise the step of each of my friends who came to see me; and I must confess that I trembled whenever I heard the strange sound of an unknown foot ascending to my apartment."

stitution. He, who never harbored in his soul either spleen or acrimony; who shunned mankind only because the violence of his melancholy caused him to view them on the worst side; he, who, with the energy that animated his pen, possessed the gentleness of a child; * who with the inexpressible magic of his eloquence disposes the heart to receive whatever impressions he pleases; who solely by his tenderness and animation, moves, captivates, and transports; who thrills the soul, and expands it with generous emotions; why should he be made the object of our scorn? "I cannot endure him," said a German lady, "because he always melts my heart."—We, therefore, hate him because we wish to renounce the feelings of human nature!*

* "He wrote like a man," says the Baron d' Escherny, "and wept like a child. His fits of anger and vexation resembled those of the early period of life; they had the same innocence and the same sprightly graces. He was really a child; his joys were as lively and his griefs as passionate; but he was a spirited child, who, nourished with the milk of philosophy, took a pleasure, during his whole life, in fighting his nurse."

* This, in spite of ourselves, we are sometimes unable to do. Another German lady, with whom I was once engaged in a dispute concerning Rousseau, used the following expression: *Je vois disparoitre tous les ouvrages de Rousseau devant une page de d'Alembert ou de Hume*—"Madam," answered I, "the cause of our dispute is, that I am in love with Rousseau, and you are not." I then went home, without farther reply, and fetched a profile of Rousseau, which is little known, but very handsome, shewed it to the lady and said: "Cannot you love that man?"—My fair opponent stammered, was silent, looked a long time stedfastly at the portrait, and at length exclaimed with a deep sigh: *Ah, qu'il est beau! Oui à present j'en suis amoureuse aussi.* —"But, Madam, was it not on account of his writings that

We calumniate him † because he calumniated himself. Therefore, because pedantry, dissimulation and deceit are in fashion among our present writers, because almost every one wishes only to shine and to appear what he is not, people are unable to comprehend why Rousseau exposes himself without embellishment and without hypocrisy, and describes all the freaks and extravagancies of his imagination and character. "It is not our nature and our manner," say they. But it was Rousseau's nature and Rousseau's manner, and for that very reason his works are read with avidity by all Europe, while the frigid writings and distorted representations of his slanderers are consigned to oblivion. He is not, I admit, a model for imitation; but may we not feel the energy of his words, and feast ourselves on the productions of his enchanting pencil? But those, who, without allowing for the infirmity of human nature, condemn Rousseau for thoughts and actions, the consequences of bodily anguish, forget the origin of the work, which, in the height of his melancholy, he resolved to place under the protection of Providence, on the high altar of the cathedral of Paris. They forget, that

you hated and despised Rousseau?"---*Mon Dieu,* answered she in the mildest tone imaginable, *je ne scavois pas qu'il etoit si beau!*

† My countryman, the Baron d'Escherny, says in his *Lacunes de la Philosophie:* "Rousseau calumniates himself in his too ingenuous Confessions. Why did he write them? This work seems to prove, that, as it has been said, if you have not a hero for a valet-de-chambre, it is difficult to preserve the character of a great man in the presence of your confessor."

this abortion of the blackest melancholy, and the Reveries of a Solitary Wanderer subjoined to his Confessions, exhibit, at the foot of Rousseau's statue, a most humiliating and affecting example of human frailty, and a deplorable proof of the perversion of a brilliant imagination by Solitude and disease.*

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* I cannot refrain from introducing in this place a few observations, suggested, by the perusal of a work lately published, entitled: *Rural Philosophy, or Reflections on Knowledge, Virtue, and Happiness; chiefly in Reference to a Life of Retirement in the Country. By Ely Bates, Esq.* In this publication the author has indulged in some unjust animadversions, and flippant reflections relative to Zimmermann, into which he has been led partly by a circumstance to which I have adverted in the preface, and partly by notions of over-rigid orthodoxy. Mr. Bates informs his readers that the idea of his work was furnished by Zimmermann's Treatise on Solitude, on which he originally intended to have written a critique, and mentions his reason for relinquishing that design. He then proceeds (Pref. v.) "Zimmermann was undoubtedly a writer of singular endowments; he possessed great mental sensibility, and a cast of imagination which might be thought sublime, but does not seem to have been equally distinguished by force of reason or solidity of judgment. In his philosophy he appears to me superficial, and in his notions of virtue wild and romantic. To justify this censure it may be sufficient to observe, that an author, who associates the names of Voltaire and Rousseau with that of the illustrious Bacon, and who regards their writings in common, as *devoted to the instruction and happiness of mankind,* must have slender pretensions to the character either of a philosopher or a moralist, and when most favorably estimated, can only rank as a grave sentimentalist."

The passage on which Mr. Bates grounds such a hasty and illiberal censure of Zimmermann's character, has certainly been distorted by the two-fold transformation it

A delicate sensibility of the nervous system, great irritability of the imagination, when acted

has undergone in the translation to which he refers. If he will take the trouble to turn to p. 182 of the first volume of this work, where he will find a more faithful transcript of the author's words, I have no doubt but his orthodox indignation will be greatly abated. Even the most fastidious and the most bigotted cannot be offended at the manner in which the illustrious Bacon is there introduced into the company of those *infidel* philosophers Rousseau and Voltaire. While I join in the profound admiration of the extraordinary attainments of Lord Verulam, expressed by Mr. Bates, my opinion of his understanding forbids me to suppose, that he would deny Rousseau and Voltaire (however adverse their principles may be to his) a place among the most distinguished writers.

Had Mr. Bates made himself acquainted with the original performance of Zimmermann instead of consulting an *unfaithful* translation, he might have been spared the trouble of writing the philippic, which occupies from p. 254 to p. 256 of his work. His objections are completely annihilated by the very words of the passage against which he directs his acrimony. From the concluding sentence, his real intention appears to be, to stab, through our author, the reputation of Rousseau, against whom he seems to bear the most implacable animosity, and whose cause is so ably pleaded above by Zimmermann. "It is to be lamented," says Mr. Bates, "that one, who seems by nature to have been meant for an amiable philosopher, should have run into the sentimental extravagancies of the citizen of Geneva, and disgracefully listed himself in the number of his unhappy admirers and panegyrists."

That Zimmermann knew how to appreciate Rousseau's merits, and to form a just estimate of his defects, all his observations on that writer sufficiently attest. Truth guided his pen, and not the narrow spirit of the partisan or sectary. But while his works remain his character cannot want a vindication. I shall therefore content myself with remarking, that whoever can peruse the pages of the German philosopher, without being deeply sensible of the truth, the ten-

upon by any powerful cause, destroy all the energies of the mind. Even the envy and calumny excited by the merited distinction, obtained by men of genius and talents, would be silent, did they but know the anguish that frequently for years oppresses the understanding, benumbs the faculties, and overwhelms the soul with languor and despondence. The celebrated Haller, whose love of fame ended only with his life, was, towards its close, oppressed by the most profound melancholy. Such was the gloom which obscured his understanding, that his imagination frequently represented beneath his feet a yawning abyss, out of which seemed to issue hideous spectres, who, by their arguments, raised doubts in his mind concerning the divine truths of the christian religion.

Such oppression of the soul is truly dreadful, even when at intervals it is conscious of its powers. But its horrors are aggravated, when the mind is

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derness, the philanthropy which pervade them, without feeling a congeniality of sentiment excited in his bosom, without conceiving a veneration and a love for their author, I envy him not.

Before Mr. Bates is again led to display the hyper-critical and hyper-orthodox illiberality he has manifested on the present occasion, before he wantonly attempts to blast the well-earned fame of a foreign author, and to stamp his memory with condemnation for what he never wrote, common justice requires that he should make himself acquainted with the subject of his censure in its native language, and not through the medium of a mutilated and faulty translation. By observing this rule, he may perhaps spare himself the shame and mortification of seeing the shafts, injudiciously levelled at the reputation of another, recoil with augmented violence on his own head. T.

no longer sensible of its energy, when the victim of melancholy despondency becomes totally indifferent to all those things that once interested and animated him, that expanded his bosom with pleasure or filled his heart with pain. It is his constant wish to be alone, but Solitude affords no relief. Renouncing the society of mankind, he buries himself in the retirement of his chamber, where every object that meets his eye serves but to increase his disgust. Every encomium upon his writings, his talents, or his character, he regards only as a mockery of his misery. The insolent attacks of public calumny and the insidious artifices of private defamation, the turbulent clamors of infuriate ignorance and the envious malignity of literary rivalship, are alike incapable of making the slightest impression upon his mind. To him the most sublime productions of the human intellect convey no pleasure. He abhors the attentions of his friends, and rudely repels all their efforts to dissipate the gloom by which he is surrounded. Not for him is the cheering luminary of day arrayed in renovated splendor, not over him does sleep diffuse its balmy influence; he wakes but to new anguish, he rises only to endure accumulated horrors.

In religious melancholy, Solitude is converted by the imagination into a state of infernal torment; because the wretched sufferer avoids the society of his fellow-creatures, and in his retirement shuns, instead of seeking his Maker, he conceives himself to be abandoned both by God and men. This deplorable state of mind is ever aggravated in Solitude and seclusion, particularly by the interference

of ecclesiastics, and others who are denominated the physicians of the soul, and who are yet unacquainted with the secret springs of the heart, who ascribe the effects of shattered nerves to the influence of the devil, who reduce morality and religion to fixed principles and systematic rules, and whose notions and ideas on every subject which concerns the human mind are equally false and absurd.*

* I must acknowledge that I am not acquainted with any works on religious melancholy with which I am completely satisfied. The physician is always too little of a divine and of a philosopher, and the divine too little of a physician, to be perfectly competent to afford all the relief and consolation which the unhappy sufferer requires. The want of such a work is very great; every one must wish for a good guide to the cure of a malady, of such frequent occurrence, which the physician of the body generally resigns to the care of the physician of the soul, and which is so often mistaken and injudiciously treated by the latter. Many ecclesiastics are totally ignorant of what physicians are capable of effecting in such cases; but, on the other hand, many physicians are unable to comprehend, that divines, by a single seasonable word, sometimes produce almost miraculous cures in this kind of malady. Till a work better calculated to afford just notions of religious melancholy, and the means of imparting relief and consolation to those suffering under its influence, shall appear, I would recommend to the perusal of every young ecclesiastic a small English book, containing many things relative to religious melancholy, of which numbers of clergymen are ignorant. It is entitled: *Observations on the Nature, Causes and Cure of Melancholy, especially of that which is commonly called Religious Melancholy, by Benjamin Fawcett, Shrewsbury,* 1780. The author, now no more, was a very pious and philanthropic English divine; he treats those laboring under this dreadful malady with the utmost affecting tenderness, examines very rationally the causes of their disease, and makes a judicious

Divines of the highest authority, as Luther, Tillotson and Clarke, convinced that religious melancholy is augmented in Solitude, have impressively warned mankind against the dangers of seclusion. Though this malady generally proceeds in part from retirement, yet sometimes it arises, suddenly, from a very different cause. An instance of this kind I once saw in a very young lady, who, in consequence of indisposition, conceived the utmost distaste for all the innocent pleasures of youth; her gloomy imagination suggested the necessity of a rigid examination of her actions, and represented as sinful the most ordinary occurrences of life. This disease of the mind evidently originated in the sickly state of the body.—I have seen a lady, young, handsome, sprightly and gay, suddenly seized with a religious melancholy bordering on madness, probably produced by a complication of causes after child-birth. She was daily attacked by paroxysms of absolute insanity, during which she continually exclaimed that she was consigned to eternal misery. These fits occurred twice or three times a day,

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distinction of those cases which the divine should relinquish to the management of the physician. He likewise indicates many sources of that consolation which none but a prudent, enlightened, eloquent and benevolent ecclesiastic is capable of affording to the wretched patient. He speaks at considerable length of the spiritual treatment. Though not rich in personal experience, he has collected much that is excellent from others, much that appears calculated to dispel mental gloom and despondency, to confirm the wavering and to cheer the dejected. His work, indeed, is rather directed to the heart than to the understanding, and, in my opinion at least, he is too much of a pietist and too little of a philosopher.

were accompanied with a violent fever, and generally lasted three quarters of an hour; but the despondency which had occasioned them was, at length, completely removed by the timely assistance of medicine.

I have sometimes observed all the symptoms of religious melancholy in females of recluse habits, who wanted nothing but a bigotted priest to plunge them into incurable despondency. A young lady of an excellent character, who had been educated in almost total seclusion from the world, once told me, that whenever she was alone, or if she but closed her eyes, she was instantly surrounded by multitudes of evil spirits. She had been a long time afflicted with ill-heath, and I had attended her during a dismal succession of various maladies which terminated in a profound melancholy. When she complained to me of these spectres, I asked her, with tender and cordial concern; whether she imagined that their presence tended to corrrupt her heart. "No," replied the lady, "but they terrify me by their frightful looks." "My dear friend," I rejoined, "these evil spirits are only the creatures of your diseased imagination, and we must have recourse to medicines in order to dispel them." —If, instead of consulting her physician, she had applied to an ecclesiastic, unacquainted with the difference between these phantoms of a disordered mind and spiritual temptation, and had he, either from ignorance or fanaticism, prescribed the exercises of pious devotion, and passed the day with her in prayer to the Almighty to deliver her from the molestations of Satan, she would probably have

been surrounded with legions of devils to the last moment of her life.

My heart still shudders at the recollection of the dismal apartment where, in my youth, I for a long time, attended a young lady of high rank, of an amorous but otherwise excellent disposition, of the most amiable manners, and equally distinguished for the beauty of her person, and the accomplishments of her mind. The obscurity of night enveloped her chamber during the whole day, and an abyss of impenetrable darkness seemed ever ready to receive her. She told me at every visit that "she was an outcast from the presence of the Almighty, a link severed from the chain of nature, born to perdition, destined, in her tranquil moments, to endure the torments of hell, but in her melancholy hours consigned to the keenest anguish of devouring flames." In this state she lived upwards of a year in the most dismal seclusion, in constant prayer, and attended only by an ecclesiastic equally ignorant and bigotted, whom the lady could never endure, and who had been appointed to that office by her husband, a man of an extremely jealous disposition. His conversation tended only to increase her malady. She happened, however, one day, to surprize her husband in an improper situation with her maid, and this discovery dissipated her melancholy with the rapidity of lightning. She recovered the perfect use of her understanding, together with her former vivacity, gaiety, and amiable manners; only her mirth at times exceeded the limits of propriety. She laughed at the imaginary horrors of her late situation, and the dismal seclusion in which she had

been voluntarily entombed. All her thoughts and actions during the preceding year she treated as the effects of a diseased fancy, and occupied herself in forming a rational plan for the conduct of her future life. In this favorable state she continued three days, but the fourth was accompanied with a frenzy, every effort for the removal of which proved unavailing.

Haller, as I have already observed, sank into religious despondency during the four last years of his life. Existence became intolerable, excepting he was employed with his pen or his studies. He frequently took not the least notice of persons of distinction who came to visit him. During this period, in consequence of ill-health, he habituated himself to the immoderate use of opium, which alternately produced in his mind a feverish elevation and dismal dejection. Two years before his death, I saw this great man suffering beneath the pressure of melancholy. Next to his passionate desire of fame, which no attacks of despondency however cruel, could, in the smallest degree diminish, the object of his most ardent wishes was, to be continually surrounded by ecclesiastics. He sent for them from all parts, sometimes procuring the company of the most enlightened, while at others he manifested neither choice nor discrimination. He requested the assistance of all; like a person afflicted with an incurable disease, who, when he perceives that it baffles the art of the most distinguished professional men, has recourse to the nostrums of ignorant empirics.

Haller's tenets were those of the severest orthodoxy; the harshness and asperity of which were

congenial with his character. These, however, tended by no means to alleviate the dejection that bowed down his soul. A few days preceding his death, he wrote to that great and good man, his friend Heyne, of Göttingen; that being on the brink of eternity, he entertained no doubts concerning the infinite mercy of the redeemer, but he knew not how he could hope to obtain pardon; an immense host of sins, the accumulation of seventy years, were marshalled in array against him; he wished therefore to be informed by that excellent divine, Mr. Less, of Göttingen, what short treatise he might yet procure, that would arm him against the terrors of his approaching dissolution. I conclude abruptly," he continues, "and will inform you of any changes that may occur."

This promise he was prevented from fulfilling by his death, which happened a few days afterwards. This circumstance that put a period to his sufferings, for a moment endangered his reputation. Immediately after his decease, a young nobleman of Bern wrote a letter to a friend at Göttingen, containing an assertion equally groundless and malicious, and which excited the highest degree of interest in Germany. "Haller," he said, "had candidly confessed, in his last moments, to the divines assembled around him, that however ardent might be his desire to believe in the principles of christianity and revelation, he remained in utter incredulity and uncertainty on those subjects."

Overwhelmed by his religious despondency, Haller was certainly inclined to doubt the mercy of the Almighty. He was afraid of death; this terror he had never concealed; but he dreaded it only as the

prelude to his appearance before the awful tribunal of Almighty justice, and as he himself expressed it, on account of the horrible depravity of his soul. If Haller had courted indolent repose in the bosom of Solitude, his melancholy would soon have acquired absolute dominion over his mind. He opposed its progress by means of opium and application to study; but this foe to his happiness returned to the charge with redoubled fury, almost every day, during several years, when he was conversing on the subject with the divines by whom he was attended, or when alone, in the hours of relaxation from his literary labors.

There are cases of religious melancholy, in which Solitude inflicts the keenest tortures on the imagination. The malady is generally aggravated by seclusion, if the sufferer be incapable of reflection, or of application to some useful employment. In this case it admits of no alleviation, excepting what it receives in social intercourse, by the diversion of the thoughts to any object that tends to infuse in to the mind tranquillity and content.

I was consulted respecting a nervous complaint by a young Genoese of very good education, who had before been the victim of a religious melancholy in which Solitude produced the most baneful effects. While a boy he had addicted himself to a vice, too frequent at schools, but which before Tissot had not particularly engaged the attention of professional men. In this destructive habit he had long indulged without being aware of its impropriety, till he was accidentally informed of the pernicious and sinful tendency of the practice. His mind, naturally virtuous, was struck with horror and

dismay. From that moment he sank into the most deplorable state of religious despondency, that continued a year and a half, and was succeeded by a species of milder melancholy, which, after a period of above four years, terminated in a dreadful nervous complaint.

During his religious melancholy, he sought relief from his malady in prayer. But, at such times, he was tormented with the idea, that in him prayer was a crime, and he imagined that he offended the Almighty by actions of the most indifferent and even innocent nature. Whatever his imagination represented to be sinful, he regarded as such, however silly the idea might be. He found it impossible, as may naturally be supposed, to recollect, when at confession, the whole catalogue of his sins. He had scarcely left the priest, before an innumerable multitude of new transgressions thronged upon his tortured mind, and he hastened back to his confessor; like a hypochondriac, who, after describing his case to his physician with unnecessary prolixity, still adds postscript to postscript, concerning the symptoms he has forgotten to specify.

In Solitude his malady operated with augmented violence. When left alone, he rolled upon the ground, sometimes for a whole day, uttering incessantly the most horrid cries. He was fond of company because there his heart sometimes found relief; but even in society he was subject to the attacks of melancholy. This religious phrenzy was at length dispelled by his associating with several intelligent ecclesiastics of his native city.

But it was not to religious subjects that his doubts and scruples were confined. He doubted the exis-

tence of objects, of whose reality his senses in vain strove to convince him. He told me that, at intervals, he was persuaded that all his terrors were the offspring of a sickly imagination, and that he had frequently joined with his friends in laughing at his weakness. But he likewise declared with horror, that he would have committed ten murders, if, by those means, he could have procured relief from a malady, by whose unrelenting cruelty his imagination was incessantly persecuted.

To alleviate his misery he had recourse to study; but he could not retain a single idea. "My understanding," said he, "always failed me when I most wanted its assistance." His faculties sank into such total impotence and imbecility, that he was incapable of exerting them, in transacting the most trivial and ordinary concerns of life.

At length his melancholy subsided: to a state of mental suffering which continued between five and six years, succeeded the nervous complaint, with which he was afflicted when I became acquainted with him. At this period, to write a letter was the labor of several months; he shunned all intercourse with society, because he imagined that he had entirely lost the faculty of conversing with mankind, and not because his mind was in the least degree tinctured with misanthropy.

Every remedy, employed to restore his shattered nerves and to correct his anti-social disposition, failed of success. Several Genoese and English physicians agreed in advising him to try, as the only remaining expedient, the effects of a long voyage. Embarking at Genoa, he remained at sea six months and landed at Riga in the same miserable

state as the day on which he quitted his native city. In a cold and serene atmosphere his complaint was less irksome, but in that of Riga, which is generally thick and foggy, he gradually grew worse. Yet in this northern latitude he suffered less from the inclemency of the climate, than from the intolerable heat of the Russian stoves. When I saw him he was perfectly free from every vestige of his former melancholy, but at intervals, if for a moment he was at a loss for an object to divert his mind, he felt the most excruciating pangs with which it is possible for human nature to be affected; and yet I never knew a man of a more agreeable temper, more acute penetration and sounder judgment.

Solitude was not the parent of the religious melancholy of this unhappy Genoese, but it aggravated the action of a debilitated constitution upon the imagination; and this melancholy probably contributed, more than any other cause, to the subsequent derangement of the nervous system.

The pen would drop from my hand, were I to attempt to describe the horrors of the religious melancholy, with which a man residing at Hanover is overwhelmed. Though of good family, he is exposed to poverty, distress and the want of the common necessaries of life. I was seized with the anguish of death when I heard him relate his dismal story; and it is impossible for me to think of his sufferings without being thrilled with horror. The torments, inflicted in the profoundest abyss of hell, cannot equal those endured by this wretched mortal.

From all these facts and observations, it is evident that Solitude may be extremely pernicious to

persons of melancholy habits, and that the imagination is the weak part which is first affected by the mischievous influence of seclusion.

It would, however, be a gross misconception of my sentiments, to conclude, that I regard Solitude as prejudicial to the imagination in every case. I should, indeed, be destitute both of sense and reason, were I to deny, that retirement and external tranquillity frequently calm the disordered imagination. It would be the height of absurdity to advise those suffering beneath the anguish of nervous complaints, to frequent scenes of amusement and dissipation, when every sound which strikes their ears, every person who approaches or addresses them excites the most agonising sensations both of body and mind.

Of the tortures endured by the nervous valetudinarian the healthy and robust are incapable of forming any idea. Every kind of social intercourse should undoubtedly be shunned by those, whose nerves are agitated and convulsed, and whose imaginations are disordered. In this state, relief can be found only in retirement and repose. This repose will be obtained, if we strive to confine the mind to a single, pleasing idea, and thus vegetate as well as we can, till the storm has subsided.

Of the efficacy of this remedy my own experience has but too well qualified me to speak. When, in order to restore my shattered nerves, I repaired to Pyrmont to drink the waters, I have walked among the multitudes by which that place is frequented, in such a state of stupefaction, as to be totally insensible to every object around me. The allurements of the most accomplished beauty

no more engaged my attention, than the repulsive figure and manners of the female vain of her illustrious pedigree; and the conversation of the most enlightened was equally uninteresting with the most frivolous discourse. When, in this state, I was assailed by a multitude of invalids, to consult me concerning maladies which a period of twenty years had incorporated into their constitutions, or complaining of ailments not worthy of notice, I must acknowledge, that I frequently lost all command of my temper, and forcibly tearing myself from society, hastened back to the retirement of my chamber, where, during the whole day, my brain was racked with sensations of the most excruciating anguish.

Into this state I was thrown in the year 1780, while at the baths of Embs, by a multitude of fanciful hypochondriasts, who, with their physicians, flocked to me for advice, and who once, notwithstanding all my opposition, detained me a whole day, with their tedious and tormenting lamentations. During the whole succeeding night and the following morning, I felt as if melted lead was continually poured over my naked skull.

The next morning I threw myself upon my bed. I determined to see nobody, and was less anxious for amusement than repose. While I lay in this manner, as devoid of thought as an Indian mystic, the princess Orlow, in whose company I took particular pleasure, and two other Russian ladies, entered my apartment. I sprang up, and with the utmost vehemence insisted upon being left alone. The ladies accordingly departed. In the space of an hour, I received a visit from prince Orlow, who

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seated himself beside my bed, and with that good-nature for which he was so eminently distinguished, and the tenderest solicitude, drew me into conversation, and made many judicious reflections on the state of my health. Among other things, he said, with a frankness peculiar to him: "You know that I am not the slave of religious prejudice, but if you should ever again be attacked by such a fit of passion, as when the princess and her companions came to visit you to-day, I advise you, as long as your friend is speaking, instead of driving him out of your apartment, to repeat the Lord's Prayer, not on account of the efficacy of the prayer itself, but because it will moderate and divert the violence of your temper."

Of this simplification and diversion of the ideas I have often experienced the efficacy, and therefore recommend it to others. Thus when the prince complained a few weeks after the above occurrence, at Embs, of the difficulty of observing the regimen I had prescribed for himself and his lady,* on ac-

* Prince Orlow and his lady, whose health was very precarious, had repaired purposely to Hanover in the year 1780 to enjoy the benefit of Zimmermann's advice. The prince found in him more than a physician and soon became his friend. He endeavoured to prevail on our author to accompany him to Russia, and for that purpose made him the most splendid offers in the name of the Empress, but without success. In 1784 Catherine made another attempt through the medium of her physician Weikardt to draw him to Petersburgh, but Zimmermann frankly acknowledged that he enjoyed at Hanover an independence which he could not expect in that metropolis. It was about this time that Catherine lost her favorite Lanskoy, whose death made such an impression on her mind that, renouncing

count of certain physical emotions, and enquired what remedy he could employ in such cases, I replied: "Before you listen to the instigations of sensual desire, always repeat the Lord's Prayer."

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all business, she withdrew into retirement, where her grief was converted into profound melancholy. In this state the present work on Solitude was put into her hands, and it was to the perusal of it that she ascribed her cure. It has already been related that this circumstance produced a fresh invitation on the part of the Empress, and that the letter in which Zimmermann declined her offer was the commencement of a correspondence of considerable duration. The following extracts from the letters of the Empress prove the high regard she entertained for the author, and will not be read here without interest.

"*Petersburg, 22d Feb. 1785.*

"SIR,

"I have just received your letter of the 28th of January, in which you acquaint me, that you have received the packet transmitted you by my minister at Hamburg. You cannot imagine with what gratitude you have inspired me. Your work *On Solitude* which, at first, I was afraid to open, because, from its title, I was apprehensive lest it should aggravate a disposition to melancholy, to which, for several months, I have felt an inclination; that work, I say, is the first thing that checked its progress, and diminished its violence. It is a book which imparts life, energy and vigor to the soul. In my opinion that excellent work is the best antidote against the malady that can possibly be conceived, at least to judge by the effects which it produced on me. Every good physician should enter it in the catalogue of the prescriptions of his art, and it will frequently be found more efficacious than a multitude of drugs, of which as your friend Weikardt can tell you, I am not very fond, so that the apothecary's bill for my own person seldom exceeds thirty *sous* per annum. Though the newspapers have stated that my health was very precarious, that I was expiring and even dead, that is not yet the case. When I therefore

Diversion of the imagination by simplification of the ideas is, therefore, the most efficacious remedy for excessive irritability of the nerves. The benign

wished you to come to Petersburg, it was not from a desire to enjoy the benefit of your presence at any professional consultation, but of becoming acquainted with a man of no ordinary understanding, talents and attainments. Such, Sir, is the idea I have conceived of you. To this opinion our common friend, the late prince Orlow and many others have not a little contributed; and your writings have powerfully confirmed it. The frankness and candor which pervade your letters, increase my desire to become more intimately acquainted with you; but as I see that you cannot, without endangering your health, expose yourself to the movement of a carriage during a journey of such length, and that a voyage by sea would likewise be attended with risks, I shall make a point of not pressing you farther on that subject, particularly as the lives of a great number of your patients probably depend on the exercise of your skill, and here, though I should take the resolution never to say a word to you on the subject of medicine, yet others would certainly overwhelm you with consultations and would consequently make you less happy than I should wish to see you. I therefore sacrifice, though with regret, the pleasure of seeing you, however desirous I may be of that satisfaction, to the step which is most conducive to your welfare. May you possess health and the full enjoyment of that reputation which your talents justly obtain. I shall content myself with the pleasure of writing to you from time to time as occasion presents. Adieu."

In another letter, written a few months after the preceding, the Empress gives the author an account of the singular manner in which she employed herself in her retirement.

"*Petersburg, 9th May, 1785.*

"Sir,

"I have received your charming letter of the 29th of March. I am delighted to see that mine has dissipated the

influence of tranquillity restores the soul to its accustomed serenity, and then nothing is so agreeable as Solitude.

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clouds by which you were surrounded. It has performed, in some measure, the same service for you which I have received from your work; the dangers which you have pointed out, have caused me to quit that solitude in which, for nine months, I had almost entirely confined myself, and which I could not without difficulty abandon. You cannot guess in what manner I employed myself during that time; on account of the rarity of the thing I will tell you. I drowned my languor in a way before unheard-of. I made a list of between two and three hundred radical words of the Russian language; of these I have procured translations in as many languages and dialects as possible and the number now exceeds two hundred. I took every day one of these words, and wrote it in all the languages I could collect. From this occupation I have learned, that the Celtic language resembles that of the Ostiacs; that what signifies sky in one language, means a cloud, a fog, a vault in others; that the word God is rendered in certain dialects the most high, the good, and in others the sun or fire. I grew tired of this *hobby-horse* after the perusal of your book *on Solitude*. But as I should nevertheless have been sorry to throw such a heap of papers into the fire, particularly as the cabinet of my hermitage was quite warm enough, I sent for professor Pallas, and after a faithful confession of my fault, we agreed to print these translations, and thus render them useful to such as might be inclined to turn their attention to the subject. We are only waiting for a few dialects from the eastern part of Siberia to put this design in execution."

Under the date of the 6th of May, 1788, she writes: "Your works have certainly nothing to fear from my ill-humor; besides, my temper, like my health, is extremely equal. I am naturally very gay, and even when dejected myself, I take pleasure in making those laugh who are

Addison on the imagination.

I therefore am far from thinking that Solitude is, under every circumstance, pernicious to the imagination; on the contrary, I am convinced that its most sublime productions are the offspring of retirement. There the dejected finds consolation and the troubled mind repose; but like every other earthly good, Solitude becomes prejudicial, in the abuse. "Great is the measure of happiness or misery," says Addison, "we are capable of receiving from the imagination only. The Almighty knows all the ways of affecting the imagination; he can infuse what ideas he pleases and fill those ideas with terror and delight to what degree he thinks fit. He can excite images in the mind without the help of words and make scenes rise up before us and seem present to the eye, without the assistance of bodies or exterior objects. He can transport the imagination with such beautiful and glorious visions, as cannot possibly enter into our present conceptions, or haunt it with such ghastly spectres and apparitions, as would make us hope for annihilation and think existence no better than a curse. In short he can so exquisitely ravish or torture the soul

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about me. Your work *on Solitude* cured me, four years ago, of the hypochondria, which had rendered me too susceptible of grief, and which had been aggravated by awkward endeavors for its removal."

From the above extracts, it appears with what justice Zimmermann might have introduced the case of the celebrated Catherine among the instances he adduces to illustrate the effects of melancholy, had not his natural modesty withheld him from recording the manner in which she was relieved from the oppressive influence of that malady. T.

through this single faculty, as might suffice to make the whole heaven or hell of any finite being." From the perversion therefore of the natural inclination to virtue implanted in us by the Almighty, proceed superstitious extravagancies and the whole train of imaginary evils, which haunt the melancholy mind in Solitude.

CHAP. XI.

OF THE PREJUDICIAL EFFECTS OF SOLITUDE UPON THE PASSIONS, PARTICULARLY IN SOLITARY OR MONASTIC SECLUSION.

ALL the passions are more easily inflamed and burn with greater violence in Solitude, than when diverted into different channels, by the various objects presented in the intercourse of social life.

Beneath the external appearance of the most perfect tranquillity, the fire of the passions still continues to glow with unabated fervor, if the mind be occupied only with its own reflections, and the imagination be excited by the constant recurrence of the same idea.

To persons of quick sensibility, strong imagination and powerful passions, Solitude is generally productive of pernicious effects, because it excites the former and inflames the latter. All our passions accompany us in seclusion. There the sickly mind broods with incessant anguish over past or present sorrows. There the memory renews each painful sensation, and every old wound bleeds afresh. Every object that once agitated the nerves or made a deep impression on the imagination, is converted either into a spectre whose incessant persecutions torment the mind in retirement, or a ce-

lestial spirit whose cheering smiles communicate the joys of heaven.

In the death-like silence of small towns, Solitude operates to the evident injury both of the head and heart. None would suspect that a devouring flame lurked beneath the surface of such apparent tranquillity, who observes the indolence and languor which commonly mark the lives of those who inhabit provincial towns, and the constant dearth of ideas which every where prevails, excepting at their assemblies and political clubs; and remarks, that nothing is capable of exciting their attention, or interesting their feelings, but those objects which may happen to strike their senses, while engaged at their windows in the daily and uniform occupation of gazing at each other.

But it is this inanity of mind, this scarcity of ideas that, in such situations, so powerfully inflames and animates the passions. Objects and occurrences, which in the metropolis remain unnoticed, or excite scarcely any interest, are sufficient to agitate all the inhabitants of a small town or village from the highest to the lowest. The sparks of enthusiasm exist in every mind, but he, who has never witnessed it, can scarcely conceive what trivial circumstances are sufficient, in petty towns, to fan them into a flame.

Cæsar, being on a journey to Spain, passed through a village in the Alps, whose inhabitants were few in number and miserable in appearance. His friends with contemptuous raillery asked him, whether it was possible, that tenants of such a wretched spot should be inflamed with the same ambition and lust of dominion as swelled the bosoms of the sons

of Imperial Rome; whether they too could be divided by factious dissensions and malignant envy.

Most certainly. In the smallest towns we find the same passions, the same jealousy, the same party-spirit and lust of power, as convulse the mightiest states, with this difference, that the performers display inferior talents and are actuated by motives of inferior importance. The slightest omission of homage to the beauty, influence, or accomplishments of the female who considers herself as the luminary of the place, kindles in her bosom the flames of Vesuvius: while, upon the most trivial affront to the hero of the other sex, he makes as much noise as the Duke de Crillon before Gibraltar.

A celebrated English writer asserts, that defamation prevails less in London, than among the females of many small country towns. In the metropolis, which offers such a multitude of characters to observation and censure, there are few who think of charging an individual with any other than his own follies, or entertain resentment, excepting against those, by whom they have been, or conceive themselves to have been, personally injured. But, in remote villages, where the same habitation has been occupied for ages by the same family, the tongue of scandal perpetuates the faults of an individual and transmits the disgrace to his remotest posterity. I have heard, says the same writer, how each family originally acquired the estate it at present possesses; and had I believed all that was told me on this subject, I should have found that none of these was in the hands of its lawful proprietor. I was informed of the amours of prudes and coquets who, for three

hundred years, have been mouldering in their graves, and was entertained with an authentic account of the crimes of persons, whose names would long since have been buried in oblivion, had not their memory been preserved to attach disgrace to their posterity.

In great cities, we forget our enmities and resentments, because we do not see or are not obliged to see the objects of them. In small towns, on the contrary, fresh subjects perpetually occur to strengthen the inveteracy of rancor and aversion. An aged and very pious female, in a village of Switzerland, once assured me, that she never noticed the wickedness of the inhabitants of the place, whom she considered as incorrigible sinners; but she was grieved to the soul to think, that, at the resurrection, she should be obliged to appear in the company of such wretches.

In every place where a small number of persons are confined within their own limited circle, animosity and dissension are the melancholy consequences of seclusion from social intercourse and the pleasures of the world. Therefore the social virtues, benevolence, compassion and every mild affection, are seldom the inmates of monastic institutions; where the mind too frequently becomes the seat of jarring passions, of hatred, jealousy and envy. In the progress of my considerations on this subject, it will be seen with astonishment, what despotic power the passions acquire over the mind in retirement.

The passion of love is always strongest when the mind seeks to escape from it. Those who experience no disappointment in the tender passion are strangers to the melancholy of love. But when ob-

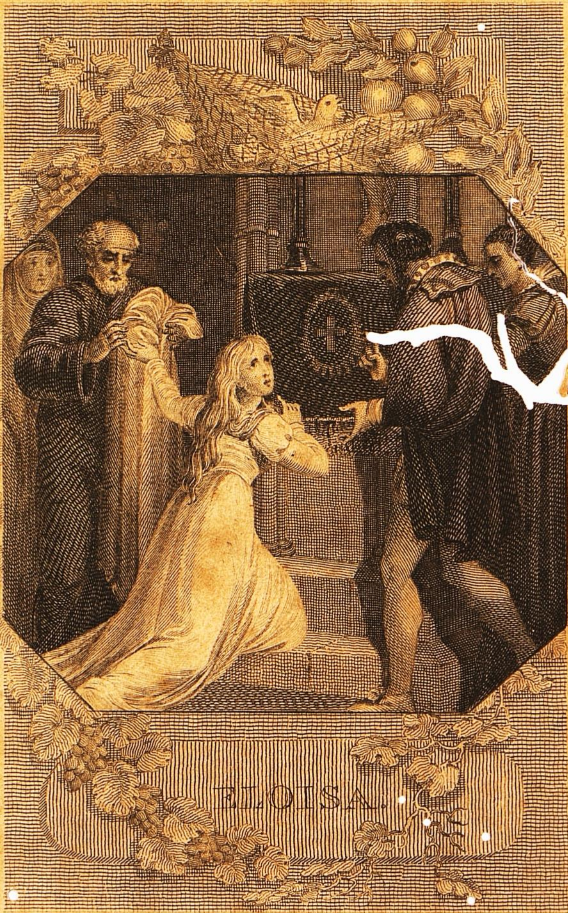
stacles intervene, when hearts are separated which cannot live without each other, when we strive to counteract this delicious poison of the soul, and oppose the cold arguments of reason to the ardent language of love and melancholy, then the omnipotence of the passion is displayed, and then we become acquainted with the power of love.

To renounce the world is a trifling effort, but to sacrifice love is a task almost too difficult for human nature. How easy it is to avoid the intercourse with mankind, to shun every social enjoyment and all the pleasures that the world can afford! In the arms of love the persecutions of envy, the insolence of power, disappointed hopes, and misfortunes of every kind are forgotten in a moment. But sincere love never decays, the memory of past bliss can never be eradicated from the mind. The charms of Solitude afford no relief to the sorrows of love; the silence of its friendly shades procures no repose for the wounded heart. All nature appears a barren blank; floods of tears cannot wash away the remembrance of former endearments, or check the impetuous longing, the vain desire for the return of those happy moments of transport and delight, which, like the impression of a pleasing dream, tend only to increase the anguish of present disappointment.

Love is not overcome in Solitude. The shepherd fills the vallies with his sighs and lamentations, the monk besprinkles his cell with his tears. The beloved name is repeated by both, is re-echoed by the rocks, is inscribed upon the trees, and constantly interposes between God and the heart. The convent of St. Gildas, in Bretagne, was seated upon a

lofty and solitary rock which the sea washes with its waves; in this rude retirement, Abelard resolved to forget his Eloisa amidst exercises of devotion, and to efface her much-loved image with his tears. But his rising virtue, his too feeble piety, were not proof even there, against the attacks of love. He received a letter from Eloisa, and his former passion revived with increased ardor. Eloisa was weak, but he found himself still weaker and much more to be pitied. Though Abelard, as may be collected from his answer, had begun to experience the consolatory effects of divine grace, yet he weakened these happy sensations by his tears and complaints. His reply to Eloisa is not that of an instructor, of a spiritual director; it breathes the impassioned language of ardent love, of a man who had adored and still adores her, who acknowledges that he has no other consolation to offer to the idol of his soul, than to describe his sufferings and the pangs he endures in tearing himself from her.

To the mind of the lover Solitude does not convey a remedy but a poison. It is intolerable to an unquiet heart. The languor which oppresses the lover's bosom is increased in retirement and seclusion. Within the walls of St. Gildas, Abelard never ceased to weep; the Paraclete had before resounded with his lamentations. Like a captive, condemned to perpetual confinement, his nights were passed in sighing and his days in constant anguish. "Even in deserts," he says, "upon which the dew of heaven never falls, we love what we ought no longer to love. The passions, excited by Solitude, subdue the soul in those regions of death and



Craig, Del.

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silence, where God is forgotten, but where love can never be rooted from the heart."

All the letters written by Eloisa in her retirement to Abelard, are flattering and soothing, but at the same time breathe the sentiments of a wild, ungovernable passion. "I am earnestly desirous to see you," says she, "but as I cannot hope to enjoy that pleasure, I will content myself with a few lines from your hand. Can it be such a hard task to write to the object of our love? Eloisa desires of Abelard no long letters filled with learning or written for reputation, all she asks is such letters as the heart dictates, the hand can scarcely write fast enough, and which proceed from the impulse of the moment. How did I deceive myself with the hopes that you would be wholly mine, when I took the veil, with the resolution to live for ever under your laws! In assuming the veil, I vowed no more than to be yours only and voluntarily entered a confinement in which, after your misfortune, you desired to place me. Why should I now conceal from you, that it was neither zeal nor devotion that immured me in a cloister? Yet here I am and here I will remain; but if you do not live for me, if you do not continue your concerns for me, if I lose your affection what have I gained by my imprisonment? What recompence can I hope for? the unhappy consequence of a criminal conduct and your disgrace have put on me this habit of chastity, and not the desire of being truly penitent. Thus I strive and labor in vain. Among those who are wedded to God I am your servant; among the heroic supporters of the cross I am a miserable slave

to a human passion; at the head of a religious community I am devoted only to Abelard.*"

"Deliver yourself," replied Abelard to Eloisa, "from the shameful remains of your passion. If you would see me here with my meagre face and melancholy air, surrounded with numbers of persecuting monks who detest me on account of my reputation for learning, and are offended at my lean visage, as if I threatened them with a reformation; what would you say of my base sighs, of the unprofitable tears which deceive these credulous men? Alas! I am humbled under love and not under the cross; pity me Eloisa, and free yourself from your passion. I am a miserable sinner, who in the intervals of reason and grace, lie prostrate before my judge, and with my face pressed to the earth, mingle my tears and sighs in the dust. Come, see me in

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* Can'st thou forget that sad, that solemn day,
When victims at yon altar's foot we lay?
Can'st thou forget what tears that moment fell,
When warm in youth I bade the world farewel?
As with cold lips I kiss'd the sacred veil,
The shrines all trembled and the lamps grew pale:
Heav'n scarce believ'd the conquest it survey'd,
And saints with wonder heard the vows I made.
Yet to those dreadful altars as I drew,
Not on the cross my eyes were fix'd, but you:
Not grace, or zeal, love only was my call,
And if I lose thy love, I lose my all.
Come with thy looks, thy words, relieve my woe,
Those still, at least, are left thee to bestow,
Still on that breast enamor'd let me lie,
Still drink delicious poison from thine eye,
Pant on thy lip and to thy heart be press'd:
Give all thou cans't and let me dream the rest.

Pope's Eloisa to Abelard.

this posture Eloisa, and solicit me to love you! Come, if you think fit, and in your holy habit thrust yourself between God and me! Come, and force from me those sighs, those thoughts and those vows which I owe to the Almighty alone! Come, assist the evil spirit and be the instrument of his malice! What power do you not possess over a heart with whose weakness you are so perfectly acquainted! But rather withdraw yourself, and contribute to my salvation. Suffer me to avoid destruction, I entreat you, by the tenderness of our former affection and by our common misfortunes. It will always be the highest love to shew none."

The ardor of Eloisa's love, however, proved a most formidable obstacle to the efforts of grace and reason. Every line of her answer evinces the influence of Solitude and monastic seclusion on such a passion. " In this temple of chastity I am covered only with the ashes of that fire which has consumed us. I am a sinner, I confess, but far from weeping for my sins I weep only for my lover. Far from abhorring my crimes, I endeavor only to act them over again; and, as this is impossible in my present situation, I please myself continually with the recollection of past delights. I know, indeed, what obligations the veil imposes upon me, but I feel more strongly what power a long habitual passion has over a tender heart. I am overpowered, subdued by this sweet inclination. My love troubles my mind and disorders my will. Sometimes I am swayed by the sentiments of piety which arise in me; and in the next moment I resign my imagination to all that is amorous and tender. To day I tell you what I yesterday determined to conceal. I had

resolved to love you no more; I reflected on my vow, my veil, and that I am here, as it were, dead and buried. But my passion soon triumphs over all these considerations, and darkens all my reason and devotion. Abelard, you reign in such secret, such inaccessible retreats of my soul, that I know not where to attack you. When I endeavor to break those chains by which I am bound to you, I only deceive myself, and all my efforts serve but to bind them the faster. O! for pity's sake, assist a wretch to renounce her desires, herself, and, if it be possible, even to renounce you! If you are a lover, a father, help a mistress, comfort a child."*

* Ev'n here where frozen chastity retires,
Love finds an altar for forbidden fires.
I ought to grieve, but cannot what I ought;
I mourn the lover, not lament the fault;
I view my crime, but kindle at the view,
Repent old pleasures and solicit new;
Now turn'd to heav'n I weep my past offence,
Now think of thee and curse my innocence.
Of all affliction taught a lover yet,
'Tis sure, the hardest science to forget!
How shall I lose the sin, yet keep the sense?
And love th' offender yet detest th' offence?
How the dear object from the crime remove,
Or how distinguish penitence from love?
Unequal task, a passion to resign,
For hearts so touch'd, so pierc'd, so lost as mine!
Ere such a soul regains its peaceful state,
How often must it love, how often hate!
How often hope, despair, resent, regret,
Conceal, disdain, do all things but forget!
Oh come, oh! teach me nature to subdue,
Renounce my love, my life, myself and---you.

Pope's Eloisa to Abelard.

Lovers of this description frequently fancy their hearts free from every voluptuous inclination, at the same time that they are inflamed with sensual desire. "If I had loved pleasures," wrote Eloisa to Abelard, "could not I, notwithstanding your misfortune, have found means to have gratified myself? I was then only twenty-two years old. What an age! and how many other men were left, though I was deprived of Abelard! And yet, did I not bury myself alive in a convent, did I not triumph over love at an age when love triumphs over every other consideration? It is to you I sacrifice the remains of my transitory beauty, my widowed nights and tedious days; and since you cannot possess them, I take them from you to offer them to heaven."

But in what manner? Love allowed Eloisa as little repose in the abbey of the Paraclete, as in the convent of Argenteuil, and it was not till towards the conclusion of her life, and after a painful contest, that her mind became more tranquil. Though it appears from her letters, that she endeavored to restrain her passion, to profit by Abelard's sacred admonitions, yet still she imagined that her love was of a pure, angelic nature, because its object was incapable of making any return. Why, if this were the case, does she so often acknowledge in her letters, that the memory of past pleasures is so agreeable, that the sweet idea every where pursues her, both by night and day, sleeping and waking, even into holy places and before the altar? Why does she declare, that she incessantly laments their loss, that she cannot repent them, nor forbear enjoying them over again as much as possible?" Through your affliction," writes Eloisa to Abelard,

"the grace of God has been strengthened in you; but my youth, and the experience of the sweetest delights serve but to augment the violence of my passions, whose conquest is the more easy, in proportion to the feebleness of the opposition which they experience."

However pure Eloisa might imagine her heart, yet the ardor of her affection assumed the character of the most ungovernable frenzy. She resigned herself to all the illusions of an imagination, driven by seclusion from the world to the highest pitch of frantic passion; contenting herself with the fallacious idea that she sinned only in thought and not in reality, that she was in theory a woman, but in practice an angel.

"Abelard," says she, in one of her impassioned letters, "I will own to you, what constitutes my greatest delight in Solitude.* After having passed the day in thinking only of you, full of the dear idea, I give myself up at night to sleep. Then it

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* When at the close of each sad, sorrowing day,
Fancy restores what vengeance snatch'd away,
Then conscience sleeps, and leaving nature free,
All my loose soul unbounded springs to thee.
O curs'd, dear horrors of all-conscious night!
How glowing guilt exalts the keen delight!
Provoking dæmons all restraint remove,
And stir within me ev'ry source of love.
I hear thee, view thee, gaze o'er all thy charms,
And round thy phantom glue my clasping arms.
I wake: no more I hear, no more I view;
The phantom flies me as unkind as you.
I call aloud, it hears not what I say;
I stretch my empty arms, it glides away.

Pope's Eloisa to Abelard.

is, that Eloisa, who dares not think of you by day without trembling, resigns herself entirely to the pleasure of hearing you and speaking to you. I then see you, Abelard, and glut my eyes with the delightful object. Sometimes you entertain me with the story of your most secret afflictions which fill me with sorrow. Sometimes, forgetting the perpetual obstacles to our desires, you press me to make you happy, and I yield without reluctance to the ardor of your transports. Sleep relieves us, when our souls, animated with mutual passion, enjoy mutual rapture. But how soon does this dear delusion, this delightful error vanish! When I awake I seek my Abelard in my bed, but I find him not; I stretch out my arms to embrace him, but no Abelard is there; I call him, he hears me not. But, Abelard, do you never see Eloisa in your dreams? How does she appear to you? Do you address her in the same tender language as when Fulbert committed her to your care? Upon awaking, do you feel pleasure or sorrow?"

Such wild extravagance, equally revolting to human reason and to moral sentiment, originated in the dreary gloom of Solitude, in monastic retirement and perpetual seclusion from the world. The history of these celebrated lovers may serve as a general example of the pernicious and irresistible influence of love, when accompanied in Solitude with the flame of impure desire. But those who are more intimately acquainted with the human heart, know what a close analogy exists between melancholy and love: that even the purest passion tends to inflame the imagination, and that the dreadful frenzy of an Eloisa is only the natural

consequence of restraint upon the passions, when the grosser fire of sensuality is associated with the pure ardors of love.

Petrarch, whose sentiments on the tender passion were infinitely more elevated and refined than those of Eloisa, felt, like her, how closely love and melancholy are connected. In the vigor of youth he sought refuge from their united attacks beside the translucent stream of Vaucluse, as the bark, shattered by the tempest, hastens to the placid bosom of the secure haven. "But alas!" says he, "I knew not what I was doing; I was far from finding the remedy that I wanted. The anguish which preyed upon my heart constantly pursued me. Cut off from the converse with mankind, deserted by my fellow-creatures, and destitute of counsel or consolation, Solitude served only to augment the violence of my sorrows. Consumed by the flames of passion, I filled the blooming vales with sighs and lamentations, which have procured more applause for the poet than commiseration for the lover."

In Petrarch love, was a noble contest in the cause of virtue, a passion pure, refined, and unalloyed with sensual desire; in Eloisa and Abelard it was the irresistible fury of inflamed appetites, ungovernable lust, and Otaheitan wantonness.

He who wishes to be the master of himself must subdue his imagination, by which the flames of lawless desire are kindled and kept alive. How frequently the agitation of turbulent passions might be prevented, if we first endeavored to obtain repose for the imagination.

Some young men imagine, that the gratification of sensual appetite is necessary for their health;

but the dim eye, the hollow cheek, the trembling hand, and the withered bloom of manhood, too often convince me, that chastity is the most important virtue, the grand specific for youths of this description. To such I would continually exclaim, in the ardent language of Rousseau: "Had no lewd object ever met your eye, had no indecent idea ever entered your mind, the incitements to sensual gratification would never have existed; you would have remained chaste without temptation and without effort."

In monastic institutions, while one passion is curbed by the rigid rules observed there, the violence of others, which no regulations are capable of restraining, is proportionably increased. The more we endeavor to impose an unnatural restraint on the passions, the more powerfully they are excited to rebel. Temptations succeed, the chastity of the soul is endangered, and if the imagination be in the smallest degree affected, these temptations acquire irresistible power in Solitude, even though the votary of seclusion exerts his utmost energies to oppose them. A great poet says: "Solitude, the silence of the convent, and even devotion itself, increase, I know not in what manner, the darling propensity to forbidden pleasures."

To conquer the passions it is always necessary first to subdue the imagination. He who in Solitude obtains the victory over all the evil thoughts by which he is assailed, has nothing more to fear. St. Jerome delivered himself, in retirement, from the influence of many vices; but lust was an enemy which he could not banish from his bosom.

John, a hermit who resided on a lofty and craggy

mountain in the desert of Thebais, gives the following excellent advice: "If there be any among you who imagines that he has renounced the world and the devil, it is not sufficient that he should have done so with his lips; it is not enough that he relinquishes his property, his estates and all earthly concerns, he must also abandon his vices and his foolish and dangerous propensities. This is the way to renounce the devil and his works. The fiend only obtains admission into our hearts through the medium of some darling vice, which we cherish in our bosoms. Our vices are the objects of his care; but our virtues proceed from God. Such hearts, therefore, enjoy no peace nor repose; they are always the sport of passion, sometimes elevated by empty joys, and at others depressed by groundless despondency. They harbor an evil spirit, which gained admission only through their passions and their vices."

Passions and vices are, therefore, the evil spirits which we carry with us into retirement, and to vanquish the devil we must subdue our base desires. In moments of the highest rapture, love confers too much happiness not to persuade warm imaginations, that it is the supreme felicity of which a mortal is susceptible; and thus it is that love overcomes reason. The sensual desire which pervaded the hearts of the anachorets in Solitude was only the offspring of the imagination. However the imaginations of these holy fathers might be inflamed in the Solitude of their deserts, they were yet strangers to love. They were familiar only with lewdness, and incontinence; and their unchaste desires were as-

cribed by these sanctified recluses to the agency of the devil.

Satan, in my opinion, was innocent of this charge. I know what bitter accusations many of the holy anachorets have preferred against him, and I am aware what a distinguished part he acts among many modern fanatics. But if such diseases of the imagination can be cured by the interference of medicine, and by diverting the mind to some other object, according to the disposition and taste of the patient, I see no reason for introducing the devil on such occasions. Thus the holy fathers, in their deserts, sometimes very rationally endeavored to expel the spirit of impure desire by a certain regimen or by labor. These means, however, were not always sufficient to extinguish the flames of licentious passion. If the monks had listened to the dictates of nature, or if all the anachorets had been able to occupy their leisure with reading and writing, their depravity would not have encreased to such a degree as it necessarily must, when taking the vow of celibacy they exposed themselves in dreary deserts to incessant temptations. They seemed to strive to subdue in their souls that propensity, to the gratification of which others sacrifice present happiness and the hope of future felicity; but their exertions were vain. Their highest pretensions to sanctity and perfection were grounded on the total abstinence from all intercourse with the sex, and yet, of all the evil spirits by which these saints were disturbed, none attacked them with such frequency and such violence as the spirit of fornication.

These conflicts mostly originated in a distem-

pered imagination. Those who are afflicted with this malady are no where so miserable as in Solitude. There, in the midst of their most virtuous resolutions, they are assailed by the most wanton ideas. In no situation they find themselves less harassed than in the intercourse with the world and with society, and in none do they suffer more than in retirement. Thus the Egyptian anachorets and monks possessed the will, but not the power, to release themselves from the influence of unchaste ideas and base passions, and the more profound was their Solitude, the more furiously raged the impure flames of forbidden desire.

We find numerous instances recorded in Ruffinus, of the inability of these recluses to overcome the violence of their passions and appetites; though, in his second chapter, the same author has collected many examples of a contrary nature. In these cases, however, they produced corporeal maladies and sometimes raging insanity.

The great Jerome, with eloquence awfully impressive, says: " When I was a young man, surrounded with deserts and entombed in Solitude, I was unable to withstand the incitements of vice and the impetuous impulse of nature. I strove to check its fury by frequent fasting, but still my soul glowed with lascivious ideas. Ah! how often did I imagine, while buried in the obscurity of my cell, amidst burning deserts and all the horrors of that unprofitable retirement, that I was wallowing in the voluptuousness of the Roman metropolis. My rebellious body was covered with a sack; filth of Ethiopian blackness concealed my skin and encased my limbs. I wept, I sighed daily, and when over-

taken by involuntary sleep, my bones, which scarcely hung together, were extended on the ground. I shall say nothing of meat and drink, for such miserable wretches have water; the simplest fare prepared by culinary art would be to them the most luxurious indulgence. And yet I, who only for fear of hell had condemned myself to this dungeon, and had become the companion of serpents and savage beasts, frequently imagined myself in the midst of a circle of young and beauteous females. My face had grown pale with fasting; yet in my frigid body my heart burned with licentious passion, and in my flesh, which was already dead, still raged the unextinguishable flame of voluptuous desire.*

Such were the dreadful effects of Solitude on the hearts of the monks and anachorets in those celebrated ages of rigid seclusion. The philanthropist, perusing such narratives, drops the tear of compassion over these deluded fanatics, while he admires the heroic efforts of their minds, the energy which frequently crowned their exertions with victory, and the more than Spartan perseverance with which they endured inexpressible torments.

In the earliest ages of the christian church every ecclesiastic was enjoined to live, if possible, in rigid Solitude and holy retirement. Their seclusion was, however, frequently employed to very bad purpose; and, as early as the third century, the fathers, Origen, Cyprian and Eusebius complained bitterly of the immorality of the clergy. All the vices of the

* The reader will be astonished when he is informed by what means St. Jerome at length subdued his unruly appetites---he learned Hebrew!

early recluses and all the crimes, revolting both to nature and religion, which were perpetrated in the catholic convents in the succeeding ages, and bespeak a turpitude unmixed with shame and undisturbed by remorse, were partly the consequences of the times; but it is not the less true that they were equally the effect of Solitude and the want of employment.

Incitements to unchastity are abundantly implanted in the nature of man, and are sufficiently active without being provoked by the seclusion and indolence of a monastic life. The cloister, indeed, tends to augment the sensual desires, only because the nature of man is such, that the strongest passions rage with greater violence when unnatural restraint is employed to subdue them. Thus when the mind is stimulated by the impulse to sensual gratification, its action is much more powerful in monastic seclusion, than in the intercourse of social life. To satisfy the favorite passion, the votary of Solitude braves every danger, regardless of prudence, decency or moderation.

The nuns of Argenteuil, who had chosen Eloisa for their prioress, probably not without good reasons, fell into great irregularities. Sugger, abbot of St. Denis, alledged the lewdness of their conduct as a pretext for dispossessing them of their convent. By the command of Pope Honorius, Eloisa and all her nuns were expelled, and Sugger established the monks of his order in the monastery. Eloisa, upon her departure from Argenteuil, applied to her beloved Abelard, requesting him to procure her a retreat, where she might enjoy sacred repose. Abelard, with the permission of the Bishop

of Troyes, gave her the house and the chapel of the Paraclete with all its appendages; and placing some nuns there, he founded a nunnery. This gift was confirmed by Pope Innocent II. in the year 1131. Thus Eloisa became the first abbess of that celebrated convent, and in this her new and last retreat, she conducted herself with such prudence, zeal and piety, that she won the hearts of all the world, and her convent was in a short time enriched with abundant donations. The bishops loved Eloisa as their child, the abbesses as their sister, and all mankind as their mother. Her first and chief care was the preservation of discipline and regularity in her convent. Every night she walked her rounds, driving into their cells those nuns whom she found abroad. " For," says she, in one of her letters to Abelard, " I remember but too well the consequences of the evening excursions of the nuns in the monasteries near Paris."

But Eloisa was too intimately acquainted with the female heart, not to know, that all these precautions were insufficient to protect the virtue of her nuns from the dangers of Solitude. Thus she writes to Abelard: " Though the divine favor, which accompanies our vows, our renunciation of the world and our seclusion, seems to secure us from all temptations; though our walls and grates prohibit all approaches, yet it is the outside only that is protected from injury. The sap of original corruption imperceptibly spreads within, even to the heart itself, producing diseases which prove fatal to the most promising plantation, unless continual care be taken to cultivate and secure it. Virtue alas! is grafted in us upon nature and the woman;

the one is always weak and the other is always changeable. Our sex is nothing but weakness; and I have the greater difficulty to defend myself, because the enemy by whom I am attacked pleases me; I doat on the danger which threatens me; how therefore is it possible I should avoid falling?"

Though objections may be made to the testimony of Boccace relative to the licentiousness of monastic institutions, yet an ecclesiastic of the catholic church declares, that the violence and rancour manifested by the monks against that writer, were caused by his ludicrous and witty descriptions of their manners, which were quite as corrupt as he represents them. "Whoever attacks the monks," says the same author, "is an enemy of religion; the man who exposes their depravity is guilty of impiety." On this account the monks shewed their indignation against Boccace, and denominated him an infidel and an atheist. "The destructive pestilence of 1348," continues the above-mentioned ecclesiastic, "had opened the doors of all the convents, and set at liberty the monks and nuns, who indulged in every irregularity, and entirely lost the original spirit of monastic institutions.* When the

* Similar observations may probably have been made on occasion of the recent earthquake in Sicily and Calabria, but none have yet come to my knowledge. However the celebrated Sir William Hamilton, who has explored the melancholy ruins, in the account of that catastrophe, transmitted to the Royal Society of London, says: "I could not help remarking that the nuns of Messina, who, since the destruction of their convents, live in barracks, were constantly walking about under the tuition of their confessor, and seemed gay, and to enjoy the liberty the earthquake

cessation of the plague obliged them to return to their convents, they continued to lead the same kind of life, and a general immorality prevailed among both the monks and nuns." The historians of those times give dreadful accounts of their excessive depravity, and the ecclesiastical writers consider the pestilence of 1348, as the period of the greatest relaxation of monastic discipline.

It will doubtless appear singular, that while those historians ascribe the profligacy of the monks and nuns to the effects of the plague, I ascribe it to the operation of Solitude. To the disgrace of human nature, it is however true, that men are never so dissolute and depraved as in time of war, earthquake and pestilence; that is, in seasons of the most dreadful calamity, among the most tremendous forms of death, havoc and destruction.

The immorality of the monks and nuns was one of the principal causes of the grand reformation accomplished in the sixteenth century, in a manner incomprehensible to its antagonists, but the necessity of which every enlightened catholic of the present day is ready to admit.

A whole century before the Reformation, several theologians, who preached before the council of Constance, described the fathers composing that council and all the ecclesiastics of the christian world, as men of the most dissolute and reprobate characters. The cotemporary writers complained,

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had afforded them; so that in my journal, which I wrote in haste, and from whence I have as hastily transcribed this imperfect account I send you, the remark stands thus: *Earthquakes particularly pleasing to nuns and schoolboys.*"

that the nunneries were the places of rendezvous of the most debauched of both sexes, the theatres of vice and profligacy, the seminaries of all the arts of lewdness, incest and wantonness. To devote a young female to the service of heaven, was, in fact, to consign her to public prostitution. Notwithstanding all the efforts that were made to correct these evils, yet, at the period of the Reformation, no real amendment had been effected. The former gross and brutal sensuality of the nuns had indeed changed, with the character of the times, into a more refined and decent indulgence in all the pleasures of the world. These brides of heaven no longer surrendered their persons to every comer; they confined their intrigues to ecclesiastics, whose company was less liable to suspicion, and whose wants were of a nature similar to their own. With a greater regard for decorum, they now appeared at public assemblies in masks and hanging on the arms of the canons; they continued their nocturnal rambles in disguise, and enjoyed, within the walls of their convents, the company of the handsome, the witty and the gay. Such have been the effects of Solitude in the lonely cell and in monastic seclusion, from the time of the first anachorets to the age in which we live.

The examples, that might be deduced from history, remove all doubt of the powerful effects of Solitude upon the purer flame of love, or the grosser impulse of sensual desire. Solitude likewise affords opportunities of indulging in vice of every kind, and of these none is so pernicious as indolence, especially to the members of monastic institutions.

Indolence and tranquillity lead persons of ardent

imaginations to the commission of every species of extravagance, enormity and guilt. Even in social life the dangers of indolence are highly alarming, and this truth has been acknowledged in every age. To this source of depravity the attention of the ancient legislators was particularly directed. Draco and Pisistratus punished idleness with death, that they might maintain tranquillity in the cities, and introduce habits of useful industry among the inhabitants of the country. Pericles sent colonies to Chersonesus, Naxos, Andros, Thrace and even to Italy, to rid Athens of the multitudes of citizens, whose indolent lives rendered them objects of just suspicion and alarm. All the factitious wants of mankind are, to a powerful state, a substantial benefit, from the employment they afford in the towns to so many persons who would otherwise remain in pernicious inactivity. To involve the English capital once more in flames, only suspend for a week, the labors of the lower classes, and the result will be commotions, civil war, massacre and conflagration.

It is singular, but not the less true, that by sewing and knitting perhaps more mischief has been prevented, than by the considerations of prudence or the arm of authority. An English writer, whose works display a profound knowledge of human nature, therefore, admires the wisdom of those who formed the system of female education, in conformity to which, every individual of the sex, whatever may be her rank or station, is taught some employment, that she may be enabled, by means of it, to occupy herself during the vacant intervals of domestic leisure. "I know not," he says, "how

much of the virtue and happiness of the world may be the consequence of this judicious regulation. Perhaps the most powerful fancy might be unable to figure the confusion and slaughter, that would be produced by so many piercing eyes and vivid understandings turned loose at once upon mankind; with no other business than to sparkle and intrigue, to perplex and destroy."

Indolence was the grand source of all the crimes of the eastern monks. In their seclusion they all experienced the oppressive tediousness of time, and very few possessed either talents or taste for literary occupations. In this state of pious indolence their imaginations were gradually heated to frenzy. Few of them were celebrated for their understanding, but all were animated with ardent zeal for religion, all were rendered turbulent by a life of inactivity, and were inspired by fanaticism with ungovernable fury. In the first years of the establishment of monastic institutions, their conduct was perfectly tranquil; but, in the fourth century the state began to feel the oppressive burthen of such innumerable multitudes of indolent recluses. Many who had undertaken the duties of public offices, actuated solely by the love of indolence, sought a refuge among the monks of Egypt. It was on this account that, soon after the year 370, the emperors Valentinian and Valens issued a decree, by which those invested with the civil authority were enjoined to drag these indolent hypocrites from their retreats, and to compel them to discharge their neglected functions. Valens even ordered, that those monks who refused to perform municipal duties, or to enter into the military service, should be scourged to

death. Zosimus denominates them men who are of no use to the state, either for war, or for any other purpose, and Eunapius says: "monks are indeed men in appearance, but they lead the life of swine, and are distinguished only by the excessive filthiness of their persons and habits."

Among the christians, all the monks enjoyed the reputation of abstinence and sanctity, but no appellation was considered by them so honorable as that of *philosophers*. This pretended christian philosophy was a philosophy of indolence, which Christ never recommended as the mean of attaining a superior degree of sanctity. This system originated in the extravagancy of well-disposed fanatics and enthusiasts. But a neglect of every thing connected with God and religion soon became the characteristic of a monk; instead of withdrawing from the concerns of social life, these recluses mingled, on every occasion, in the affairs and tumults of the world. "They could not cease," says Montesquieu, "to create commotions in every quarter, and to convulse the world which they had abandoned."

Though manual labor was enjoined to the monks in the Egyptian convents, for the purpose of avoiding the dangers of Solitude, it would be a fallacious conclusion to suppose, that they were constantly employed. It cannot be denied that the first superiors of the anachorets and monks considered labor as absolutely necessary; for they adopted the maxim, that a monk who was employed had only one devil to combat, whereas the indolent were exposed to the attacks of a legion. The first recluses retired into the most barren deserts, where the stream supplied their only refreshment. There they resided

in wretched huts of reeds and cultivated the earth. Of those who lived in the vicinity of towns, some were weavers, others paper-makers, and others hired themselves as laborers during the harvest and the vintage. Many employed themselves in the cultivation of corn or fruit-trees, in making baskets and in various handicraft businesses. All these occupations were exercised at stated intervals, and in certain proportions, which, however, they voluntarily exceeded. Even when engaged in these active duties they used to edify themselves with singing and prayer. Those who had attained a higher degree of sanctity and perfection remained in their cells, and while they were employed in different manual labors, the holy scriptures, as we are assured by Heraclides, were incessantly the subject of their meditations. According to the same writer, none was permitted to indulge in total indolence; but Solitude, prayer, fasting and labor were alike enjoined to all.

Palladius has left a picture of a convent of Pachomius, which he himself visited; but were we to form an opinion of the lives of the monks from his account, we should be grossly deceived. This convent was situated in one of the Egyptian towns, and contained between three and four hundred monks, each of whom exercised his respective business. With their earnings they supplied their daily necessities, and appropriated the surplus to the use of the female recluses in monasteries and solitary cells. They likewise bred cattle, whose flesh they either sold or devoted to the refreshment of the sick and the aged. The other members of this fraternity rose before day. While some were employed in

preparing the repast of the community, others spread the tables and placed on them bread, olives, herbs and vegetables. About noon those of the most delicate constitutions took the first refreshment, and they were succeeded by a fresh company every hour till late at night. Some, of more hardy frames or more persevering spirits, disdained to eat but at intervals of two or three days. Each had a stated hour for taking his repast, and was assigned his daily portion of the general labor. While some were engaged in the pursuits of agriculture and gardening, others provided the implements for those purposes. One made clothes and another shoes. This devoted his time to reading or writing, that was employed in making baskets and mats; and all were so familiar with the holy scriptures that they knew them by heart.

The rules which Pachomius instituted for all the convents which he established, were judicious and praise-worthy. But neither the inhabitants of those convents nor of any others remained faithful to the monastic regulations. We must not form an opinion of the eastern monks by their rules, or by the efforts of the first votaries of Solitude to observe them, but by the lives which they universally led. "Labor was enjoined them," says Jerome, "that the devil might always find them employed." History, however, proves that they lived not only in a state of indolence, but, in general, in perfect independence of all law and authority.

They every where manifested an inclination to a roving life. The towns were thronged with monks, who repaired to them for no other purpose, than to relieve their weariness of those deserts, where they

had solemnly vowed to spend the remainder of their days in perpetual Solitude.

This propensity of the monks was encouraged by the bishops. They drew forth from their deserts whole armies of monks as auxiliaries in their wars with the heretics. Thus St. Anthony left his mountain and repaired to Alexandria to curse the Arians. The great Basil, by the encouragement he gave the monks, was the occasion of their appearing more frequently in the cities, than was permitted by the ordinances prescribed them. However in the year 390, the Emperor Theodosius the elder enjoined all the monks to reside in solitary places and in extensive deserts; for as early as that period, many of them, forgetting the piety, humility and peaceable demeanor which ought to distinguish the monastic character, had excited the most dangerous commotions in the cities. They neglected those occupations to which it was their duty to attend, and, weary of a monotonous life of seclusion, they officiously interfered in all public affairs.

The patriarch of Alexandria, having obtained permission of Theodosius the elder to destroy all the Pagan temples in that city, entreated the monks to afford him the assistance of their prayers in this important undertaking. They granted him a more effectual aid, and poured forth in great numbers upon the pious enterprize, armed with clubs, stones and implements of iron. The furious zeal of the monks was inflamed in a higher degree, in proportion to the solidity of those magnificent edifices; for they imagined that the devil himself opposed the efforts and machines of the christian destroyers. All these monuments of antiquity were burned and

demolished, and the heathen priests durst make no resistance, at least if they had any regard for their lives. Their destructive rage was not confined to Alexandria; they proceeded from one temple to another in the adjacent towns and country, marking their way with fire, rapine and devastation.

By their indecent menaces and tumultuous intercession in behalf of prisoners and criminals, the monks frequently interrupted the administration of justice. During the insurrection at Antioch under the elder Theodosius, they descended, in multitudes, into that city, from the neighboring mountains, to release the culprits from the sentence of the law. They remained several days before the door of the tribunal, ready to rescue the criminals by force, when led to execution. Many of them violently detained the judges and would not suffer them to proceed, till they had promised to pronounce a favorable sentence upon the offenders.

Thus we find that solitary situations, the shady forest and rugged mountain, were not long the abodes of repose, tranquillity and useful employment among the oriental monks. By languor and indolence, these pious enthusiasts, though secluded from the tumults of the world, were rendered envious, quarrelsome, turbulent, cruel and ferocious; till at length they became formidable to the emperors themselves. The populace was always at their beck, and the clergy were particularly anxious to secure their co-operation. The monks were, consequently, induced to resign their occupations entirely, to wander about in holy indolence, and to engage in any enterprise, rather than return to the life of dull

and wearisome uniformity which they were obliged to lead in their cells.

The monks universally enjoyed the reputation of sanctity, let their actions have been what they might. This character, which they were far from deserving, caused them to behave and to speak to princes and magistrates with the greatest arrogance and insolence. Two Syrian monks repaired to Antioch to support the catholic faith, during a time of persecution. The Emperor Valens, seeing one of them passing by, asked him whither he was going in such haste. "To pray for the empire," replied the impetuous monk. "But," said the emperor, "according to the monastic regulations, you ought to stay at home and pray alone." "Well," rejoined the recluse, "and with that regulation I have hitherto complied, as long as the sheep enjoyed peace; but now they run the risk of being devoured by wild beasts, it is necessary to make the utmost exertions for the preservation of the fold." This reply did not appear to the monk to be sufficiently audacious, for he added: "the proper place for a young female is in the most retired part of her father's house; but if the house take fire, none can blame her for quitting her station, and running for water to quench the flames; in like manner, as thou, Valens, hast set fire to our father's house, so we run about every where with water to extinguish the conflagration." The emperor made no reply to this insolent address, because all the inhabitants of Alexandria were partisans of this recluse; but, on this occasion, a great ecclesiastical historian makes the reflection, that the monks did not throw water upon the fire, but oil.

The monks even obliged the emperors to repeal their edicts; and Theodosius the Great had more than once the weakness to consult the abbot John, who lived in the Egyptian deserts, concerning a war he was about to undertake. Circumstances of this kind strengthened the inclination of the monks to intermeddle in temporal concerns, increased their aversion to the manual occupations which were enjoined them, tended gradually to render indolence more general, and to corrupt their morals. As early as the fourth century they excited tumults in the cities, and were guilty of the most flagrant atrocities. Besides the unlimited desire of building themselves houses in which they might serve the Almighty at their ease, all the monks were, in the fifth century, inspired with the spirit of ungovernable licentiousness. At that period their immorality had already become proverbial. One of the most estimable and the most acute ecclesiastical historians, Mr. Spittler, of Göttingen, compares the oriental monks of that age to a corps of mercenaries, which was ready to co-operate with any party, and was rendered formidable not only by its numbers and audacity, but likewise by the fanaticism which its members communicated to the rest of the people.

Every step of the oriental monks was marked with violence, and their mildest conduct was full of energy and expression. In the fifth century they were engaged in a long and furious contest on the question, whether the opinion of Nestorius, the patriarch of Constantinople, or that of Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria, concerning the mystery of the incarnation and

the nature of Christ, should be branded as heretical. Nestorius was an orthodox bigot and a violent persecutor of heretics; and St. Cyril was a haughty, ambitious, shameless and crafty knave. As the great question concerning the orthodoxy of these two venerable characters was to be decided in a synod held at Ephesus, Cyril repaired to that town, accompanied by a numerous body of Egyptian sailors; and what was of equal service, he induced the monks of Constantinople to espouse his cause. All the archimandrites and all the monks in that metropolis immediately assembled, to the number of about one thousand, and repaired, amidst the singing of psalms, to the imperial palace. The archimandrites demanded admission to the emperor, while the monks surrounded the palace, still continuing their devout exercise. The emperor had the prudence to give the archimandrites a courteous reception, and sent to the outrageous monks, to desire they would assemble in the church of the martyr Majus. Thither they accordingly repaired in procession and amidst the singing of psalms. On their arrival at the church, these worthy partisans of St. Cyril were informed, that the emperor granted all their demands relative to Nestorius. The church rang with shouts of triumph, and Nestorius was condemned as a heretic by all the inhabitants of Constantinople.

The psalmody of these insurgents had an air of mildness and solemnity. But the other tumults occasioned by the monks, and most of the religious disputes, were unaccompanied with singing. The monks generally supported their opinions with their

fists, and not unfrequently with fire and the effusion of blood.*

Such were the outrages committed by the monks, in the prosecution of the great contention between Nestorius and Cyril, concerning frivolous distinctions of terms.† Eutyches, the aged abbot of a convent near Constantinople, containing three hundred monks, had for seventy years led a life of rigid celibacy and seclusion. Though he had resolved never to quit the walls of his convent, excepting in cases of unavoidable necessity, yet he did not enjoy tranquillity in his Solitude, for he had grown grey in zeal for orthodoxy, and in hostility to all heretics. No sooner was Eutyches informed

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* Those might think themselves fortunate who could succeed in pacifying those pious scoundrels with compliments. For example, in the year 399, the Egyptian monks rose against Theophilus, archbishop of Alexandria, because he condemned the error of the Anthropomorphites, who believed that God has a body resembling the human body. Theophilus perceived, that, amidst the innumerable multitude of monks who had flocked to Alexandria on this occasion, his life was in great danger; but a fortunate idea extricated him from his critical situation. "Methinks I behold the face of God, when I see you," said Theophilus to these fanatics. This unmerited compliment moderated their fury, and they unanimously exclaimed: "If you believe that God has a face, we will not put you to death; but now you must likewise curse the writings of Origen." Theophilus complied, and the storm was appeased.

† Nestorius maintained that the Virgin Mary ought not to be called the mother of God, but the mother of Christ; that the word became flesh by uniting with the flesh of Christ; that Christ assumed this flesh, to live in it as in a temple; but that he did not die, and only re-animated the body in which he became flesh.

that the opinions of Nestorius on the mystery of the incarnation differed from the sentiments which he entertained, than his indignation was irresistibly excited. Leaving his convent, in which he had resolved to bury himself as long as he lived, he hobbled with all possible expedition to the emperor, to represent to him that Nestorius was an arch-heretic.

Eutyches himself was, according to the decision of the church, in the same predicament. He was universally detested for the odious and heretical idea, that the holy scriptures, and not the writings of the fathers, were the repository of the doctrines of christianity. He was hated by all the bishops, suffragans of the patriarch of Antioch, because he accused them of favoring the Nestorian heresy, and prevailed on the emperor, Theodosius II. to deprive many of them of their dignities. But scarcely had Eutyches drawn some new conclusions concerning the nature of Christ, from the doctrine broached by Cyril, when all those prelates attacked him like blood-hounds, and summoned a council in which Eutyches in his turn was declared an arch-heretic.

Dioscorus, the successor of Cyril in the chair of Alexandria, undertook the defence of Eutyches. All the Egyptian bishops and a whole army of monks ranged themselves under the banners of their patriarch. The monks were totally ignorant of the point in dispute, but for that very reason, the contest was the more violent. In all preceding religious controversies the parties had been contented with calling councils, fulminating mutual anathemas and excommunications, deposing the hostile prelates and reducing them to beggary. On this

occasion, however, regular engagements took place, and were attended with much blood-shed; and all for empty words and expressions relative to a mystery of religion, understood by neither of the con tending parties.

The leaders of the hostile armies of monks were Domnus and Dioscorus. Domnus, a man of moderate talents and much affability, had passed a great portion of his life in the solitude of the deserts. He had not sufficient penetration to foresee and to avoid difficulties, nor the dexterity to extricate himself from such as he was unable to shun. Dioscorus was a prelate possessing great abilities, sagacity and acuteness; his literary attainments were very great, and he enjoyed the most undeserved reputation for extraordinary sanctity. The episcopal chair of Alexandria had been filled sixty years by the family of Cyril; these prelates had extended their power, partly through the indulgence of the emperor and the neglect of the governor, partly through the support of the monks and their own relations, to whom they had given the principal ecclesiastical preferments. They were, in fact, almost sovereigns of Alexandria. This undue influence and power, usurped by his predecessors, was carried by Dioscorus to a still higher pitch. He disgraced, confined, or reduced to penury the imperial viceroys when they opposed his designs, or only gave him cause of dissatisfaction. Towards the people of Alexandria he was a savage tyrant. On the slightest pretexts he plundered the inhabitants of their property, set fire to their houses, cut down their trees and laid waste their beautiful gardens. He kept assassins continually in his pay, and those who

were most obnoxious to him were taken off either privately or in public. Had it not been for the opposition of the governor of Egypt, Dioscorus would, in a short time, have converted the populous city of Alexandria into a desert. Such was the character of the leaders of the Egyptian monks, and such were the Egyptian fruits of the mild gospel of the Saviour.

I have no occasion to enter into the detail of all the other events, attending the great dispute with Eutyches. At this period, says an English ecclesiastical historian, it would have been a greater crime in the christian church to judge Nestorius innocent, than to deify Judas Iscariot, or a monkey. It is sufficient for my purpose that an army of Egyptian monks took part in all these contentions, with the same fury as a troop of savage and ferocious beasts.

The Egyptian monks, those angels of peace as some modern fanatics have denominated them, who knew the whole of the sacred scriptures by heart, were deeply concerned in the persecution, excited by Dioscorus at the sanguinary council of Ephesus, against the bishops who were not of his party. The mere recital of those scenes affords a complete idea of the spirit of the age. Eutyches delivered to the council of Ephesus his confession of faith. On this occasion a clamor was raised against Eusebius, bishop of Dorilæum, who proposed to compel Eutyches to acknowledge two natures in Christ, as violent as that which had before been excited by those very prelates against Eutyches, for refusing his assent to the same tenet.

Such was then, and such has ever been the variable nature of orthodoxy. The former advocates

of the two natures now declared, that Eusebius deserved to be burned alive or to be torn in pieces. These useless protestations were not sufficient for Dioscorus; he desired those who possessed weaker lungs to hold up their hands as a token that they, as well as the others, condemned the doctrine of the two natures. The voice of Dioscorus, his terrific looks, the presence of the soldiers, and the still more formidable menaces of the monks, who completely surrounded the place in which the council was held—all these circumstances contributed to fill the whole assembly with such terror, that they unanimously lifted up their hands, and exclaimed: "Cursed be he who believes the existence of two natures in Christ; let such be out-lawed, put to death and torn to pieces!"

Thus the opinions of Eutyches were declared to be orthodox at the council of Ephesus, by the same holy fathers who had before condemned them as heretical. But the tumult did not stop here: for when the opponents of Eutyches, the bishops Eusebius of Dorilæum, and Flavian of Constantinople, had been degraded from their dignity, Flavian appealed against the injustice of this sentence, which occasioned another general commotion. Dioscorus called in the monks who were ready at his beck. Some were provided with chains, and others with scourges and weapons. All those pelates who did not concur in the unjust condemnation and digrace of Flavian, were, by the command of Dioscorus, most unmercifully scourged. He, with his own hands, beat Flavian with such savage cruelty, that two days afterwards the unfortunate prelate expired.

These and innumerable other atrocities were perpetrated, with the pious intention of fixing the opinion of christendom, relative to the mystery of the incarnation and the nature of the Saviour. In the essential point all the contending parties coincided, so that it was the establishment of verbal distinctions and abstract terms, which filled them with such implacable animosity.

In all these ecclesiastical feuds the monks acted the parts of banditti, incendiaries and assassins. No atrocity was committed without their participation. They were the instruments of all the violence and the murders committed for the purpose of extending the christian religion, and supporting the ever-varying tenets of the orthodox faith.

An Egyptian monk, Timotheus, surnamed Aelurus, or the Cat, was so distinguished for his cunning and cruelty, as to deserve particular notice. Not long before the conclusion of the Eutychian controversy, in the year 457, he took a fancy to aspire to the dignity of bishop and patriarch of Alexandria: for the ambition of one or the other of these scoundrels was the secret cause of all the religious controversies, anathemas, excommunications and murders. The Cat was cunning enough to perceive, that he could not accomplish his desire without the assistance of the Egyptian monks, who were always employed in the useful capacity of assassins and incendiaries in all the disturbances of those times. In order, therefore, to gain over these venerated instruments of the true faith to his interest, he put on a white garment, and crept, in the dead of the night, into the cells of his brethren, whom he called by their names through a tube. If the monks returned

any answer, the Cat, in a feigned voice, informed them, that he was an angel, and commanded them, in the name of the Almighty, to desist from all communication with that Nestorian heretic, the patriarch Proterus, and in his stead, to elect the orthodox Aelurus patriarch of Alexandria. The monks had not the slightest suspicion of the imposture. The angel who appeared to them every night was the only subject of their conversation; and they considered the Cat as appointed by God himself to be the patriarch of Alexandria. With a fanatical zeal they unanimously espoused the cause of this favorite of heaven, marched to Alexandria, and under the direction of the Cat, excited a terrible commotion in that city.

A number of desperate villains, the usual auxiliaries of the monks, joined the fanatical troop, and they were all provided with arms by the heaven-elected patriarch. In this manner the holy rabble proceeded to the principal church of Alexandria, where, amidst the loud acclamations of the monks and banditti, two degraded prelates ordained the Cat bishop of Alexandria and metropolitan of all Egypt.

Proterus, the legitimate bishop, was terrified at this bold and impudent proceeding of the Cat. He fled from the episcopal palace, hastened to the church of St. Quirinus and took refuge at the font. Heathens and barbarians, though they knew not for what reason, had respected this sanctuary; but it was not capable of protecting Proterus from the ambitious fury of the impostor and his sanguinary adherents. The most innocent blood was spilled, on the very spot where the vilest of criminals had

been accustomed to find shelter. Six other ecclesiastics were murdered in the same place, and their bodies were left by the assassins. The corpse of the patriarch, Proterus, was dragged to a public place, where they hung it on a gallows, Having been there exposed for some time to the brutal fury of the populace, they again dragged the mangled body through the streets of Alexandria, after which they burned it and dispersed the ashes; in order to deprive their patriarch of an honor, which is not denied to the vilest malefactors.

Such, in the fifth century after the birth of Christ, was the character, and such was the conduct of the Egyptian monks, those taylors, blacksmiths, carpenters, weavers, fullers and bleachers, all of whom knew the sacred scriptures by heart, and who were enjoined a life of Solitude, labor, fasting, watching and prayer.

As early as the conclusion of the fourth century, Theophilus, patriarch of Alexandria, in an epistle addressed to the synod, describes the monks of Nitria as foolish and frantic fanatics. I should not quote this epistle, because the censures it contains are levelled against those monks, who adhered to the opinions of Origen; and because a man of such a bad character as Theophilus is not entitled to any great degree of credit. Jerome, however, has translated it into Latin, and thus stamped it with his seal; besides which its veracity is confirmed by the concurrent testimony of other writers. "Among the Egyptian monks," says Theophilus, "there are men who have mutilated their persons with knives, to obtain the reputation of humility and piety, by their mangled faces and the want of ears.

One of them cut off a part of his tongue, to display to the ignorant, in his slow and inarticulate speech, his rigid observance of the word of God and the folly of his heart." When Theophilus, accompanied by most of the fathers from every part of Egypt, arrived in the desert of Nitria, the sainted abode of the most celebrated of these recluses, in order to read and to condemn the works of Origen, those holy fanatics attempted to murder him. Having taken possession of the church, thay there deposited their clubs and sticks, which they covered with palm branches, thus concealing beneath those emblems of peace their sanguinary disposition.

It was the anachorets and monks, who so furiously engaged in the controversy concerning Origen. This holy rabble, these taylors, blacksmiths, carpenters, weavers, fullers and bleachers, and in particular the anachorets, seldom knew for what they were contending.

Origen was a man, whose talents none of the monks was able to appreciate, and whose doctrines very few of them could understand. In his youth he had mutilated himself with a view to extinguish the flame of sensual desire. The greatest ecclesiastical historians, both ancient and modern, agree, that no other teacher of the age subsequent to the days of the apostles could be compared to Origen, for extensive talents and attainments, profound knowledge, indefatigable industry and rigid virtue. He was a man of the most sublime piety, and of the most invincible energy and perseverance. A celebrated German historian says of him: "He was the only teacher of the ancient church who, possessing extensive stores of learning, and affording himself

a permanent example to the remotest generations, undertook to explain the sacred writings. He was the first among the christians who knew how to apply the critical part of grammar to the text and the more ancient translations of the bible; that is, to examine the accuracy of the former, and its correspondence with the latter. He likewise made the first essay towards a connected and complete system of the christian religion, grounded on the sacred scriptures, and supported by philosophical arguments. To propagate and defend that religion, he practised the most heroic virtues, and crowned all the enterprises of his extraordinary zeal with mildness, modesty and humility."*

It was against this man, that those taylors and blacksmiths sat in judgment. Origen, it is true, is liable to many objections, for he sought to give the theology of his age a refinement and a philosophic tendency of which it was not susceptible; and, as his above-mentioned intelligent panegyrist acknowledges, his fancy and invention are frequently much stronger than his judgment and penetration. Hence he united mysticism with religion. "But," adds the historian, "Origen was far from recommending

* The following passage from Origen's twenty-fifth homily on Luke, will not be read here without pleasure, nor without emotion: "Many," says he, "love me more than I deserve, speak too much in my praise and ascribe to me what I neither have nor desire to possess. Others calumniate all my words and actions and accuse me of opinions which I never entertained. Both exceed the bounds of truth, the latter out of malice and hatred, the former out of tenderness and love, which is frequently not less prejudicial than enmity."

or framing a mystical system of theology at the expence of true religion. Of his opinions, which have been denominated heresies, many are rather proposed as questions than brought forward as established facts. They were in part extracted merely from translations of his writings, sometimes without regard to the amended explanations in other parts of his works. Though many of his performances were written in great haste,* yet they all manifest the most ardent love of truth, and an invariable determination not only to say that of which he was himself convinced, but likewise to apply it as much as possible to the amendment of mankind. Justice ought, therefore, to be done to this respected character, whose merits are infinitely greater than his defects, whose works were altered even during his life and much more after his death, who succeeded in subduing himself and yet had so many inveterate enemies."

Such reflections as these never occurred to those taylors and blacksmiths. The majority declared against Origen on very slight grounds, and both his adherents and his enemies were filled with furious zeal. They had probably heard that, during his life-time, Origen had been excommunicated by Demetrius, bishop of Alexandria; but they were ignorant that Demetrius was a worthless wretch, who was instigated to that measure by his envy of Origen's extraordinary reputation. They were ignorant that, as we are assured by Socrates and Sozo-

* This must necessarily have been the case, for Origen's pen was so prolific, that he is said to have extended his performances to six thousand treatises. T.

men, it was not till two hundred years after Origen's death that Theophilus, the above-mentioned patriarch of Alexandria, instigated by the basest motives, procured the condemnation of Origen's works at a synod held in that city, and excommunicated all those who adopted the tenets of that writer.

Those taylors and blacksmiths were ignorant, that this condemnation was confined to a few platonic ideas contained in Origen's writings. Still less did they know, that the christian religion of his age was blended with a multitude of similar ideas, which derived their origin from Plato; and that, while Origen was proscribed by the christian church, it tolerated and approved a great number of works replete with the most abominable errors. They knew not that this measure was only a pretext, employed by the crafty and ferocious Theophilus, to implicate some of the servants of the church, who had the spirit to oppose his sordid designs. They knew not, that Theophilus had recourse to the meanest practices and the vilest artifices to gratify his revenge, and that this was the only cause of his zeal against the tenets of Origen.

With all these circumstances those ignorant taylors and those grim-looking blacksmiths, fullers and bleachers, were entirely unacquainted. It was sufficient for them, that their upright patriarch, Theophilus, encouraged them to engage in the contest, and instigated them to the commission of acts of violence. The parties soon came to blows and particularly at Alexandria. The Origenists principally resided in Palestine, and the most zealous of the monks and anachorets, inspired by love and hatred

of Origen, had regular engagements in their Solitude, which were productive of much blood-shed. All these events occurred in an age, during which some modern enthusiasts have asserted that the peace of God reigned in those deserts.

So furious and undaunted were the oriental monks, that the troops of the Greek emperors sometimes fled before them, or complied with all their demands. Chrysostom, though a warm advocate for monastic institutions, nearly fell a sacrifice to the fury of the monks of Cappadocia. Through the weakness of the emperor Arcadius, the intrigues of his faithless consort, Eudoxia, and her paramour, Count John, Chrysostom had been shamefully disgraced and banished to Cucusus in Armenia. Falling sick upon the way, he was unable to proceed farther than Cæsarea. The bishop of that city was his enemy, and unmoved by the poverty, sickness and fallen fortune of Chrysostom, he immediately excited against him the animosity of the monks.*

* This probably was the more easily accomplished by the bishop of Cæsarea, because, though Chrysostom always endeavored to promote the love of a monastic life, yet he regarded most of the monks as men of vile characters. While he was archbishop of Constantinople and the first prelate of the empire, he turned his serious attention to a reformation, not only of all ecclesiastics but particularly of the monks, and publicly condemned, from the pulpit, the immorality of the clergy. Though he was the strenuous advocate of those monks, in general, who withdrew into the solitary retirement of the deserts, yet he never missed any opportunity of severely animadverting on the conduct of such who, under a variety of pretexts, wandered about the streets of the imperial metropolis.

The latter were not remiss in obeying the summons; they surrounded the house, where Chrysostom was detained by illness, and threatened, if he did not instantly depart, to burn it over his head. The garrison of Cæsarea marched to the place, and in the most conciliating terms, intreated the monks to relinquish their design. The monks, however, retorted with menaces and defiance. "We have encountered men," they exclaimed, "superior in bravery to you; we have fought, hand to hand, with the imperial guards and put them to flight, and if you venture to make the smallest opposition we shall not hesitate to attack you." The intimidated soldiers repaired to Chrysostom and earnestly implored him to depart immediately, notwithstanding his feebleness and infirm health, as they were unable to protect him from the fury of the monks, who were more ferocious than wild beasts; at the same time declaring that they would rather engage an army of the fiercest barbarians than encounter those pious fanatics.

It is from such traits that we must judge of the characters of the oriental monks and recluses, and not from the eulogies of modern fanatics.

Peter, surnamed Fullo, because he exercised the trade of a tanner, belonged to a convent of Constantinople, and, notwithstanding his occupation, found means to excite the greatest disturbances in that city. The monks of the fifth century had either relaxed in the manual labors in which their predecessors were engaged, or those employments were not capable of repressing the ardor of their imaginations. Peter Fullo, during the solitary exercise of his profession, conceived the fancy of in-

troducing a slight alteration into an ancient hymn used by the church. On this account a disturbance was first raised during the performance of divine service, and two hundred sturdy monks, whom this affair had brought to Constantinople, were the champions on the occasion. The whole city was, at length, thrown into the most violent commotion, as if the christian religion itself had been menaced with imminent danger. Many persons of high rank narrowly escaped with their lives, and a great number of the principal edifices in the metropolis were destroyed by fire. The tumult encreased to such a degree, that the emperor appeared without his crown among the enraged populace, and declared, that he would with pleasure resign the government, if they would desist from farther violence on account of the hymn.

The conduct of the Stylites affords a striking demonstration of the prejudicial effect of Solitude on the passions. The most solitary of all recluses, the greatest of all mystics, the most pre-eminent of all anachorets, the saints who exposed themselves on columns, interfered, nevertheless, in temporal concerns. The lofty nature of their aërial penance could not prevent these fanatics from exciting commotions among the people, from convulsing thrones, and being the blind and devoted instruments of designing ecclesiastics. Their passions accompanied them to their columns, and were only aggravated by the voluntary sufferings they endured.*

* In the year 423, Theodosius the younger having directed the synagogues to be restored to the Jews at Antioch, the celebrated Simeon Stylites wrote him a letter in such an

History of Daniel Stylites.

Daniel Stylites was, in the fifth century, a recluse of this description. His station was on a mountain near the Black Sea. It was composed of two lofty columns, which were joined together by means of iron bars; on these was erected a third column of smaller size, and on its summit was mounted the holy anachoret.

The violent winds and the intense cold of winter rendered this penance particularly painful. In that inclement season, Daniel was once near being blown by a tempest from his elevated situation. Though he escaped that misfortune, yet such was the violence of the storm, that the clothes were torn from his body. He remained immoveable on his post, but his limbs were benumbed with cold. His disciples ascended, and, with more tenderness than prudence, washed his body with warm water to restore it to animation. The operation, however,

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arrogant and authoritative tone, and demanded the revocation of the order in such a peremptory manner, that the emperor, who was a weak man, not only complied, but likewise dismissed the governor who had advised the measure. Simeon likewise took great interest in the proceedings of the council of Chalcedon; and as a proof, that though he never forgot the world in his column, he was however unacquainted with it; he maintained, as we are informed by Evagrius, that the council of Chalcedon, like every other council, was inspired by God, and was consequently infallible. In this instance Simeon, the mystic, thought like a fool; and his insolent letter to the emperor Theodosius renders it rather improbable, says an ecclesiastical historian, that this madman had, as it has been asserted, received extraordinary gifts from the Holy Ghost; for he was a fanatic and an advocate for persecutors, rioters, robbers, house-breakers and rebels.

was attended with such success, that he was able to take an ample share in a commotion excited, at a subsequent period by a patriarch of Constantinople.

This was the patriarch Acacius, who was engaged in a dispute with the emperor Basiliscus. The emperor considered it his duty, to employ the power, with which heaven had invested him, for the honor of the orthodox faith. He ordered one of his eunuchs to be burned alive in his chamber, because he had ventured to speak in favor of the council of Chalcedon; a proceeding which militated against the emperor's notions of orthodoxy. On this occasion the monks and the people declared in favor of the council, but they were not a little terrified by the manner in which the emperor maintained his opinion; and their zeal for the cause was considerably abated. Acacius was desirous of reviving the flames of this zeal, as he was himself a partisan of the council of Chalcedon. He, therefore, encouraged the monks to oppose the emperor, and by his sermons excited the people to rebel. Meanwhile the principal object of his solicitude was, to involve in the controversy the hermit, Daniel, who had stood for several years on his column, and was already held in the highest esteem by all the inhabitants of Constantinople.

Acacius wrote a very serious and moving letter to the hermit. He described the danger with which he was menaced, on account of his zeal for the pure faith of the council of Chalcedon, and therefore implored the protection of the man of God upon the column. The simple anachoret was deeply affected by this epistle. With the most ar-

dent zeal, with an audacity, hardihood and fury, which can be forgiven only in a saint or a madman, Daniel wrote to the emperor, that he was a tyrant, a second Dioclesian, and, as if the empire had been submitted to his disposal, he even threatened his sovereign with the loss of his crown.

This was not sufficient for Acacius. He perceived but too plainly, that if the holy anachoret were to descend from his column, to repair to Constantinople, and publicly to denounce the emperor Basiliscus as an enemy of God and the orthodox faith, the monks and the populace would be fired with rage, and in the violence of their indignation, probably deprive the emperor both of his crown and his life.

To accomplish this pious purpose two bishops were employed. They were instructed, to represent to the holy man the danger which impended over the christian church and the true faith. They were directed to request, to implore him, to leave his column for a short time, and to accompany them to Constantinople in order to rescue the orthodox religion, and to save many souls from eternal perdition. This proposal gave the anachoret some concern; for he had not quitted his station on his column during a period of sixteen years. He, however, had recourse to the wonder-working efficacy of faith and supplication; and, in a trance, was expressly commanded by heaven to go to Constantinople.

Such was the weakness of Daniel's limbs, that he was unable to walk, and he was, therefore, carried to the metropolis. On his arrival, the whole city was in motion. The populace crowded to meet

him out of every street and every gate. His presence was proclaimed with loud acclamations of joy, and he was carried in triumph to Acacius. An incredible multitude assembled, before whom Daniel preached a sermon, full of calumny, scurrility and abuse of the emperor. He branded Basiliscus with the epithets of an enemy of the church, a blasphemer, and a heretic, and wished that the indignation, the vengeance, and the fire of heaven might overtake him.

Daniel's sermon produced the desired effect. The populace were inspired with the utmost fury against the emperor. Some of them proposed to lay Constantinople in ashes, and others to destroy the palace, in which the emperor with his family resided. Basiliscus thought it advisable to leave his capital, and repaired to the palace of Hebdomon, not far from the metropolis, leaving, as he himself declared on his flight, the government of the city and all its inhabitants, to Daniel Stylites.

The furious anachoret was not yet satisfied. He pursued the emperor, accompanied by the frantic populace and a host of monks. During this march, Daniel is said to have performed a miraculous cure. It is likewise related, that, on his arrival at court, he struck dead a Gothic noble, who was unable to refrain from laughing at his extraordinary and uncouth appearance.

The emperor's guards were either ignorant of these miracles or deficient in faith; for they positively denied the frantic anachoret admittance into the imperial palace. Their firmness and resolution suddenly abated the courage and zeal of the populace and monks. Daniel's wonder-working

power appeared suddenly to have lost its energy: for though, by the efficacy of faith and prayer, he might have demolished the walls and gates of the palace, and in spite of all resistance, have cleared the way to the emperor's apartment; yet he turned back with the utmost complacency, shook the dust from his feet, and again repaired to Constantinople. Thus Daniel, like many other saints, only possessed the power of performing miracles among those who were inclined to believe them, but was totally incapable of exercising that talent among the incredulous.

A great revolution was, nevertheless, effected at Constantinople. Zeno, who had been obliged to resign the crown to Basiliscus, and had, for nearly two years, concealed himself among the mountains of Isauria, being informed by his friends of the commotion excited by the anachoret at Constantinople, put himself at the head of an army raised in haste, and marched directly towards the metropolis. This intelligence was a thunder-stroke to the emperor. He placed no confidence in the soldiers, and still less in the people. In this dilemma, such was his pusillanimity, that, accompanied by his consort, he repaired to the great church of Constantinople, where he begged pardon of the villain Acacius and the frantic fanatic Daniel, for his past misconduct, and, with a flood of tears, implored their mercy and protection.

The emperor even forgot himself so far as to prostrate himself at Daniel's feet, to embrace his knees and to address him in the following words: "Most holy Daniel, let mercy take the place of justice; consider me no longer as the ene-

my of God and of his church, for I am willing to make amends for all my past transgressions, and will punctually perform all that you and the most holy Acacius shall prescribe!" The unpolished anachoret remained impenetrable and unmoved; exulting in his victory, he upbraided the emperor, extended like a worm at his feet, in the severest terms, and told him that his fate was the merited vengeance of heaven.

Basiliscus kept the promise he had made to Daniel. On his arrival at his palace, he repealed all the ordinances and decrees passed during his administration, which militated against the opinions of the anachoret and Acacius. He confirmed the see of Constantinople, and Acacius, whom in this act of repeal he denominates his most revered and most holy patriarch and archbishop, in all their honors, rights, and privileges. By these concessions he hoped to allay the storm, and to prevent all the misfortunes which threatened to overwhelm himself and his empire.

All was in vain. The most holy Acacius remained irreconcileable, and the unpolished Daniel continued to rail and to upbraid. The insults of the populace, who were subject only to the control of Daniel and Acacius, were daily aggravated. Zeno, having no obstacles to oppose his progress, was approaching the metropolis. The unfortunate emperor, abandoned by all mankind, left his palace, and, with his family, took refuge in the cathedral of Constantinople, placed his crown upon the altar, and abdicated the imperial dignity. Acacius delivered the wretched Basiliscus, his wife and children into the hands of Zeno, who ordered them all to be

immured in a castle in Cappadocia, where they perished of famine. Thus the object of the divine mission of Daniel Stylites to Constantinople was accomplished. Acacius, who had no farther occasion for the zeal or the miracles of the anachoret, suffered him to return in peace to his Solitude, and Daniel again took possession of his former elevated station.

These examples will suffice to shew the effects of anachoretical and monastic indolence in the solitudes of the east, and how inconceivably great must be the fanaticism of those, who discover, in all these recluses, ministers of peace and pious followers of the mild gospel of Christ.

The regulations, at first adopted in the monasteries of the west, were equally excellent with those originally introduced into the monastic institutions of Egypt. In the sixth century, St. Benedict enjoined his monks to employ themselves in manual labor, prayer, study, and the instruction of youth. Their labors were particularly useful in those times, being directed to the cultivation of the unprofitable desert, the draining of morasses, and clearing the land of the immense forests by which it was covered. Occupied with these laborious employments they were diverted from fanatical projects, and those who were particularly devoted to study had no leisure to indulge ideas of that nature.

Boniface, the apostle of the Germans, but whose object was rather the exaltation of the pope, than the diffusion of the doctrines of Christ, in this respect surpassed even Benedict himself. He was inflamed with the hope of establishing his system of christianity among the infidels, and with this en-

thusiastic ardor he left England and landed in Germany. He was recommended by the Roman pontiff to Charles Martel, and by the latter to all the prelates and nobility of Germany. In the year 745 he was consecrated bishop of Mentz, and was elevated by the pope to the archiepiscopal dignity. He founded convents, in which not only the sciences flourished, but which were excellent seminaries for the education of young ecclesiastics.

But all these admirable monastic regulations were soon neglected. As early as the tenth century the monks disdained to apply themselves to manual labors; they accordingly admitted laymen into their convents, who performed the menial offices of those establishments, and all the labors required by their rural and domestic economy. Every monk aspired to be a priest, and having exchanged a life of active and useful employment for ease and luxurious indulgence, they became equally turbulent and dissolute. Their riches but increased their cupidity, and the character of the times rendered them rude and barbarous.

The convents every where became the abodes of indolence and debauchery. If an abbot, or superior of a convent endeavored to restrain the excesses of his monks, he rendered himself so obnoxious, that if his death was not the consequence, they either deposed or kept him in a state of continual terror and alarm.

When the Duke of Bretagne heard with what malignity Abelard was persecuted, on account of his talents, by his less enlightened contemporaries, he nominated him abbot of the convent of St. Gildas in Bretagne. In this secluded situation Abelard

hoped to find repose, and imagined that he had now escaped the persecutions of his enemies. But he found in his convent the greatest irregularities, and the monks so thoroughly depraved, that it was impossible to reclaim them. They had been deprived of the greatest part of the revenues of the monastery, and were consequently obliged to maintain their mistresses and their children at their private expence. The monks even endeavored to poison him, and as they could not effect their purpose at the common repasts,* they attempted to succeed by means of the holy sacrament. It is impossible to read, without sympathy, the account which he gives of his situation, in a letter to his friend, Philintus. "I live," he says, "in a barbarous country, the language of which I do not understand; I have no conversation but with the rudest people. My walks are on the inaccessible shore of a sea, which is perpetually stormy. My monks are known only by their dissoluteness, and their only rule is to submit to none. Could you see our convent, Philintus, you would not think it one. All the doors are ornamented with the feet of stags, the heads of wild boars, and the hides of the most disgusting animals. The cells are hung with the skins of deer. My monks are wakened only by the sound of the horn and the cries of the dogs. They pass all their days in hunting, and would to heaven, all their pleasures were as innocent as that diversion! I endeavor in vain to recal them to their duty; they

* Abelard having one day left the portion assigned him by the monks, another person ate it and died upon the spot.

have all conspired and combined against me. They frequently surround and load me with abuses; I am continually exposed to new dangers; I imagine every moment that I see a naked sword suspended by a hair over my head."

Monastic indolence is not the only medium by which Solitude acts upon the passions. The melancholy disposition of the natives of the east, their fondness for subtle and unprofitable disquisitions, the obstinacy which seclusion is so liable to produce, the scandalous ignorance with which it is so frequently accompanied in the monks, the contagious influence of every species of fanaticism in monastic institutions, and the frantic rage it invariably excites, occasioned all the outrages, bloodshed and enormities that disgrace the annals of the christian church.

Melancholy, misanthropy and inhumanity jointly swayed in the breasts of the oriental monks; and are too often implanted in the bosoms of the members of monastic institutions in general. A state of seclusion invariably aggravates a natural obduracy of character. Enthusiasts, who are perpetually doing violence to their own nature, who are obliged to renounce all the pleasures of life, are strangers to the soft emotions of humanity. This asperity, this obduracy are constantly gaining ground in the character; a tyrant to himself, naturally becomes a barbarian to others. When the heart is insensible to all the charms, to all the enjoyments of existence; when the bosom is estranged from philanthropy and social affection, and no other attachment fills their place in the soul; when man renounces the society of his fellow-creatures without seeking the

communion with his Maker, the claims of humanity are totally disregarded. Destitute of fear, of reason, and of "the milk of human kindness," unsusceptible of the soft emotions of sacred sympathy, such an iron-hearted wretch would behold, without concern, the subversion of universal nature, and exult in the mighty ruin, were even he himself involved in the general destruction.

Misanthropy and cruelty sometimes take possession of the bosoms even of the monastic, who observes with scrupulous fidelity the severe rules prescribed him. His own sufferings render him callous and indifferent to those of others. His heart is filled with hatred and contempt towards all those who appear more happy than himself, who do not, like him, court misery and renounce the feelings implanted by nature in the human breast. Such was the misanthropy, which, in the convents both of the east and west, soon produced rage, cruelty, and every species of enormity; fruits, that filled hell with joy, and that flourished in a particular manner in monastic seclusion.

Though this turbulent spirit is no longer so prevalent in the convents of modern times, yet who can reflect without horror on the cruelties that are still inflicted by monks upon their brethren! According to the rules of Columbanus, the western monks formerly received one hundred lashes for the slightest fault.* Prior to the time of Charlemagne,

* In the year 507 a nunnery was founded by St. Cæsarius. It is considered as a remarkable demonstration of his benevolent disposition, that the castigations which he prescribed for the nuns, were confined to *only* thirty-nine lashes on their naked bodies.

the abbots mutilated the persons of the monks, depriving them of a limb or putting out their eyes. But still more terrible is the infernal contrivance of a subterraneous dungeon, in which, in the present mild and enlightened age, many a monk has been entombed alive, because he possessed more understanding than his bigotted brethren.*

Among such fanatics as the oriental monks, the smallest spark soon produced a general conflagration. One individual excited the fury of all the rest. The church soon caught the flame, and the ardor of the monks was encouraged by its elders, "who," as Gregory Nazianzen informs us, "were strangers to christian charity, and listened only to the dictates of anger and revenge, who watched the conduct of others not to amend but to disgrace them; who praised or condemned their brethren not on account of their merits or defects, but according to the party to which they belonged; who admired in one what they reprobated in another; who were involved in endless controversies and disputes, resembling a battle fought in the dark, in which it is impossible to distinguish friends from foes; who made the most insignificant trifles the subjects of contention; and all under the specious pretext of defending religion, while they were abhorred by the heathen, and despised by all the genuine professors of christianity."

Such is the picture left by the great Gregory Nazianzen of the christian ecclesiastics of the fourth century. All the atrocities committed by the

* To a monk, who is to be buried alive, this inhuman sentence is announced by the mild expression; *Go in peace.*

monks proceeded from their attachment to characters of this infamous description.

In each succeeding age the fury of the monks burst forth with augmented violence. From the fifth to the end of the sixth century, all religious controversies called into action the most frantic and ungovernable zeal; for at that time the monks were almost the only theologians. It was not by faith and prayer, that these theological champions endeavored to propagate their religious opinions, but by force. Learning was at first considered by them as an obstacle to the attainment of perfection; so that the minds of the generality of the monks were as illiterate, as their manners were rude and savage. In many convents, the oriental recluses durst not open a book without the permission of their superiors, and most of the latter were idiots, who considered the theological attainments of a monk as worthy of admiration, only when combined with the most extravagant fanaticism. It was their love of controversy, and their ambition to obtain ecclesiastical preferments, which led them to literary studies. That party however continued to be the strongest, which was ever ready to demonstrate with the fist to every sceptic, that all human science, and particularly philosophy is prejudicial to genuine piety and the interests of religion; for its members enjoyed the highest respect from the thoughtless crowd, over which they possessed the most despotic influence. The cause of this party was espoused by all the hermits and all the women.

With those powerful auxiliaries the women and the populace, the monks rendered themselves for-

midable to the Greek emperors, whose weak minds were commonly unable to stem the impetuosity of such a torrent. By means of tumults were effected ecclesiastical revolutions, which were always ascribed to the operation of the Holy Ghost. The aid of the monks was of the greatest importance to newly-elected bishops, whom they sometimes accompanied in a body, to take possession of their dignity, singing psalms the whole way. They knew what powerful effects sound and parade are capable of producing on women and on the lower classes of the people. Even in the churches, and during the performance of divine service on the sabbath, they very easily led the populace into the most sanguinary excesses. The requisitions of the monks and the demands of the people the bishops were obliged to approve, and the emperor to sanction.

The simple, genuine doctrines of christianity, divested of fanaticism and superstition, were branded in the east as the most abominable heresy. Vigilantius, a Spanish elder, became acquainted, during his travels in Egypt and Palestine, with the religion then in fashion in those countries. After his return he wrote against it; he ridiculed the superstitious practices he had witnessed, the veneration paid to martyrs and the miracles performed at their graves, and was no less severe on pilgrimages, fasting and celibacy. Jerome's indignation was roused in his cell, against this blockhead as he denominated him, and he wrote in such furious terms against Vigilantius, that the latter acted the most prudent part he could have adopted in such a case, he was silent.

Pelagius.

Pelagius, a pious monk, and a native of Britain, was declared a heretic at the commencement of the fifth century, because he was deeply concerned at the great decline of true piety, and zealously exerted himself in the cause of practical christianity. He labored assiduously to inculcate the doctrine, that all men may be happy if they please. This doctrine he preached a considerable time at Rome, where it experienced no opposition. On the invasion of Italy by Alaric he fled to Africa, and a deacon of that country accused him before the bishop, of being a heretic, who entertained improper notions concerning the election of grace. A synod was accordingly convened, and the opinions of the stranger were condemned. Pelagius sought refuge in Palestine, where Augustine provoked against him the formidable force of Jerome's orthodox indignation. The heretical Pelagius conceived, that man had sustained no loss by the fall of Adam, that death is a natural consequence of our nature, and that all may attain eternal felicity by obedience to the precepts of the Redeemer. The orthodox Augustine maintained, on the contrary, that all the striving and the utmost exertions of men towards effecting the great work of their conversion and salvation, were totally useless. At that time, as well as since, some of his adherents and followers in Africa, France and other countries, have been mad enough to suppose, that man is not only predestined to felicity and damnation, but likewise to virtue and vice.

Theological discord always flourished in a particular manner in dreary cells. Within the walls of sequestered convents, superstition, malice, ambition

and implacability had the most rapid growth; and in the warmest countries was first raised the outcry against religious errors, heresy and schisms. It was at this furnace that those monks whose ambition aspired to fame, eminence and dignity, forged the weapons for the attack of their brethren. The whole christian church was thus continually divided into parties, who hated and persecuted each other on account of the most trifling differences of opinion; till two centuries afterwards, no resemblance remained, and all religion was banished from among them.

Egypt, Palestine and Syria were convulsed by the endless and favorite question of the monks, whether Christ had two natures or only one. This was, for a long time, the sum of the christian religion in the east, all the rest consisting only of superstition, sophistry and ridiculous disquisitions. Every religious controversy was succeeded by violent political commotions. By means of the monks and anachorets, the council of Chalcedon created as much disturbance in the world as Mohammed or Attila.

Theodosius, a monk who had been convicted of sedition and other crimes, was expelled his convent by the bishop, and after being publicly scourged in Alexandria, was conducted through the city on a camel. He then repaired with some of his associates to Chalcedon, to learn the proceedings of the council assembled in that city. All their transactions were condemned by this exemplary character. Fired with orthodox indignation against the decrees of the fathers, Theodosius hastened to Palestine, and loudly complained wherever he went,

that the christian religion had been overthrown by the council of Chalcedon. The council, however, had done nothing more than sanction the opinion, that Christ had two natures. Theodosius maintained that he had only one, and to prove the truth of his opinion he inspired all the monks and anachorets of Palestine, very few excepted, with the same fanatical fury by which he was himself inflamed.

Having collected an army of monks, hermits, thieves and robbers, Theodosius marched to Jerusalem. He made himself master of the city, and augmenting his force by the release of all the malefactors confined in the public prisons, he abandoned to the fury of his followers all those who refused to admit that Christ has two natures. He even contrived to involve in the controversy the beautiful Eudocia, the widow of Theodosius the younger, who, before her elevation to the throne, had been celebrated as the amiable poetess and philosopher of Athens; but who being suspected by her weak husband of infidelity to his bed, voluntarily retired to Jerusalem and employed herself in founding churches and convents. In a word, all Jerusalem was in an uproar.

The city was now completely abandoned to the frantic rage of the monks. Women of high rank were abused, and others of the inhabitants were scourged and murdered. Both great and small were forcibly compelled to condemn, as well verbally as in writing, the doctrine of the two natures. Persons of the most unaffected piety were cruelly put to death, and their houses were plundered and burned. None was spared who had the courage to

maintain that Christ has two natures. Juvenal, Bishop of Jerusalem, was just at this time returning from Chalcedon, and it was resolved to oblige him to curse the doctrine to which he had there subscribed. With this requisition he refused to comply, on which the monks sent assassins to dispatch him. The villains mistook their victim, and murdered Severianus, Bishop of Scythopolis, with his whole retinue, because they would not acknowledge that there is only one nature in Christ. Juvenal fled for refuge to Constantinople, and the arch-villain Theodosius was unanimously elected to the episcopal chair.

Theodosius immediately commenced a general persecution against all the professors of the obnoxious tenet. Numerous bodies of assassins were dispatched from Jerusalem to the other towns, with unlimited orders to murder, destroy and extirpate all who should hesitate to curse the doctrine of the two natures, particularly the bishops; and this command was executed with unexampled cruelty. In some of the towns the bishops were the first to join the murderous band. Instant death awaited every prelate, who did not immediately subscribe to the orthodoxy of Theodosius, and most of his clergy experienced the same fate. New bishops were then elected out of the ranks of the assassins. Athanasius, a deacon, who had the courage, in the midst of the church at Jerusalem, to say to the savage Theodosius: "Cease to make war against Christ;" was hurried out of the church, and after suffering various kind of torture, was beheaded. His body was then dragged through the streets of

Jerusalem, and at length, thrown to the dogs to be devoured.

The monks of Jerusalem, and the adjacent country, together with the anachorets whom they had collected, were the first and the most ferocious instruments of all these atrocities. When their fury had subsided, they felt remorse for their conduct, and in a letter which they transmitted to Constantinople, to Pulcheria, the sister and successor of the emperor Theodosius, they endeavored to exculpate themselves from the guilt of those disgraceful proceedings. The reply of Marcian, a veteran whom Pulcheria had selected for the partner of her throne, was liberal and noble. He assured this holy rabble, "that he had received positive intelligence of their participation in all the crimes which had been committed on this occasion; that he did not punish monks, but only murderers and incendiaries; monks had understandings too confined to decide such questions as that concerning the two natures of Christ; he, the emperor believed that our Savior, Jesus Christ, was very God and very man; but he would not compel any one to adopt this tenet, nor would he, by menaces and force, oblige others to believe what he regarded as truth."

Notwithstanding these terrible examples, fanatical sophistry and solitary indolence continually involved the infatuated monks in new controversies, by which they never failed to convulse both the eastern and western world.

Sophronius, a monk of Alexandria, took it into his head to reprobate the doctrine of one will in Christ, and made the acknowledgment that Christ

had two wills, the test of orthodoxy. The emperor Heraclius, during whose reign Sophronius broached this idea, refused to admit but one will, and prohibited the mention of the new docrine. Maximus, another monk, and the most active champion of the newly-invented orthodoxy, went from province to province, calumniating the emperor whom he denominated a second Julian, and by his fanatical zeal excited the greatest disturbances in Africa.

The emperor Constans had no time to examine the question concerning the two wills, because the Arabs were subduing one province of his empire after the other. He therefore enjoined silence. With this injunction the furious monks, however, found it impossible to comply, particularly as the new orthodoxy was favorably received by the Roman pontiff, whose opinion was cohfirmed by a synod held at Rome. The bishop was not only deposed, but banished the country by the emperor, who was even inclined to order him to be beheaded. His successors profited by his example, and adopted, or at least appeared to adopt, the opinion of the sovereign.

Constantine Pogonatus, the son and successor of Constans, execrated the ancient opinion and was particularly severe against the Romish bishop, Honorius, by whom it was defended; and, on the contrary, embraced the new tenet, which his father had condemned. The doctrine of the two wills was again considered as orthodox, till Johannes Maro, an enterprising monk of Mount Lebanon, not only brought it again into disgrace, but excited

a rebellion against the emperor, and made himself master of the whole country.

In the war concerning images, the monks were the obstinate partisans and champions of their brainless brethren of wood and stone, but their fanatical exertions on this occasion were not crowned with their wonted success.

By the decree of the council of Constantinople, in the year 754, it was established, that the adoration of images was damnable idolatry, as God was thus deprived of the glory which in justice belonged to him alone. This doctrine was condemned by the monks as the most abominable heresy, because many of them obtained considerable profit by the sale of their paintings. All the monks firmly defended the worship of images, and in spite of the imperial ordinances, encouraged the adoration of their pictures. They then, according to custom, abandoned their peaceful solitudes, flocked in crowds to the cities, and every where excited the populace to rebel against their impious sovereign.

The bishops preferred complaints of these irregularities to the governors of the provinces, who transmitted them to the court of Constantinople. The emperor directed the decrees of the council and the laws against idolaters to be rigidly enforced. In consequence of these commands, the convents were stripped of their images, and the monks who made resistance were put into confinement, publicly scourged and expelled. Some of the convents were demolished and others burned. Draco, the governor of Lydia, Ionia, Caria and Mysia, had a great number of monks in his province. He

at first endeavored, by soothing remonstrances, to persuade them to deliver up their images, intreating them no longer to delude the ignorant populace, nor to excite insurrections. The monks were deaf to all his solicitations, and Draco, therefore, resolved on their total extirpation. He surrounded one of their principal convents with his troops, seized all the monks, cut off the noses of some, and sent others into exile. In the same manner, he apprehended all the monks and nuns in his province, and marched them, under a sufficient guard, into an extensive plain, where he ordered every monk to marry a nun, on pain of losing his eyes. Most of them complied, but the remainder submitted to the cruel operation. Draco then burned all the pictures and images, and plundered and destroyed the convents. The governors of the other provinces contented themselves with confining the seditious monks, whom they either sentenced to be scourged or to be banished to uninhabited places.

The most outrageous of these fanatics repaired to Constantinople to insult the emperor in his capital. They excited daily tumults in every quarter of the city. The emperor, apprehensive of a general insurrection, ordered the monks to relinquish their habit and to renounce their indolent profession, or to quit the metropolis within three days, upon pain of being treated as disturbers of the public tranquillity, rebels and enemies to the church and state.

Many threw off the sacred habit, renounced the monastic life, entered into the state of matrimony, and conducted their brides through the public streets of Constantinople. Others retired into deserts and perished of hunger and misery. The

most zealous remained in the metropolis, concealed themselves by day, went, under the cover of night, from house to house, and kept alive among the people the spirit of sedition and insurrection. Two of them publicly insulted the emperor in person, which roused Constantine's indignation to such a degree, that he ordered all the monks who fell into his hands either to be put to death, to be dreadfully scourged or driven into exile. Of the two, whose misconduct produced this harsh treatment, one was beaten to death and the other torn in pieces by the enraged soldiery.

For many centuries the eastern monks were engaged in perpetual dissensions, contests and rebellions. They formed the standing army of the ambitious prelates, defending alike the orthodox or the heretic. These Swiss of heaven, as Pope calls them, fought for every tenet and opinion, and always imagined that they were espousing the cause of the Almighty.

Even the most holy of all these sacred characters, the monks educated in the school of the great Anthony, on the celebrated mountain of Nitria, imbrued their hands in blood.

The sacred mountain of Nitria was situated at the distance of about sixty miles from the city of Alexandria, and beyond it lay the desert of the same name, over which a great number of cells were dispersed. The most remote of these cells were, however, no more than sixteen miles, according to Ruffinus, or only eight according to Cassian, from the village of Nitria, situated at the foot of the mountain. As early as the conclusion of the fourth century, this sacred district contained five thousand

recluses. They resided in fifty convents, composed of groups of adjoining habitations, each of which was under the spiritual direction of a superior. Each individual was at liberty to live either in one of these societies, or by himself, and, in the opinion of Tillemont, these Nitrian recluses were rather anachorets than cenobites.

Some spent their time in contemplation and others in labor. "Each," says Palladius, "strove to surpass the rest in piety, austerity and penance, and in the exercise of every virtue.

In the whole district there was only one church, in which all the monks and hermits assembled twice a week. The rest of their time they passed alone. "Every evening," says Palladius, "such songs in praise of the Savior resounded from each of the cells, that a stranger would have imagined himself transported to heaven, and that he lived with these recluses in the midst of paradise."

In the church of Nitria were three palm-trees, on each of which was suspended a scourge. One of these was for the anachorets, who charged themselves with the commission of any fault; the second was for thieves, and the third for such strangers as did not manifest sufficient reverence for this sacred region. The anachorets and thieves were obliged to grasp the trunks of the trees, while they received chastisement for their offences.

Palladius likewise informs us, that among the inhabitants of the mountain of Nitria, there were physicians and dealers in wine, because among so many thousands of monks and anachorets, it is natural to suppose that some, from indisposition, needed medical attendance and refreshment. Ruf-

finus, however, declares, that the healthy sometimes lived without bread; that some subsisted only on bread and salt, and very few on oil. Many never reposed to sleep, but continually remained in a sitting attitude, and the only object of their meditations was the word of God.

Near the church was a hospital for the entertainment of strangers. Ruffinus relates with what hospitality he was received in this holy place. "When we approached," says he, "and these saints were informed that we were brethren from a foreign country, they suddenly issued from their cells and thronged around us like a swarm of bees. They manifested extraordinary gaiety.* Most of them brought us bread and goats' skins full of water. They then conducted us into the church amidst the singing of psalms, and afterwards washed our feet, as if they wished to relieve us from our weariness, but, in reality, to impart more spiritual energy to our souls by this service of love. What shall I say more of their cordiality and their attention to anticipate all our wants? Each of them was solicitous to enjoy the pleasure of leading us into his cell; and

* This disposition is not rare among recluses on receiving a visit. I never saw greater gaiety and cordiality than among nuns, who live in complete and continual seclusion, on the arrival of an unexpected visitor. How lively, how cheerful, how nimble they are, how their eyes sparkle, how lightly they trip along to set before him whatever they have, how they rejoice and congratulate themselves! With what pain, on the contrary, they hear of his intention to depart, and with what tenderness and ardor they solicit his speedy return! This scene, however comic it may appear, I never could behold, but a tear bedimmed my eyes.

not contented with having exercised the duties of hospitality, they gave us instruction in humility, of which they themselves afforded such striking examples, in benevolence and all the other virtues that may be learned among such men, who, on that account alone, have withdrawn from the world; and who, though the effects of grace may vary in different individuals, are yet animated by the same precepts to the pursuit of the same object. We no where saw the flame of christian love burning with such splendor; we no where observed the mercy of God operating so powerfully; we no where met with such extraordinary hospitality, such profound meditation, such an intimate acquaintance with the sacred scriptures, such a continual solicitude to learn every thing which it behoves a saint to know. The understandings of all were so enlightened, that there was not one, of whom it might not be said, that the wisdom of God dwelt in him."

Those who had received instruction in all spiritual matters in these institutions, and had attained a higher degree of perfection, resolved to lead a life of still more rigid seclusion. They removed farther into the desert, to the distance of several miles, where nothing was to be seen but detached cells. In each of these cells resided only one individual, and they were so far asunder as to be out of the sight and hearing of each other. Here, in the year 391, Palladius reckoned six hundred anachorets, who lived in profound silence and tranquillity. They never assembled excepting on Saturday and Sunday, when they all repaired to the church, though some resided at the distance of ma-

ny miles. There they appeared like inhabitants of the celestial regions who deigned to visit the earth.

If any one was absent on this occasion, it was immediately concluded that he was sick; the patient was visited by all his brethren in their turn, who carried with them such refreshment as he needed. On no other account was their silence and tranquillity ever interrupted, excepting one of these recluses was desirous of imparting instruction or consolation to another. These visits were however so extremely rare, that many died in their cells before any one knew that they were indisposed.

Palladius and Ruffinus unanimously declare, that the anachorets of Nitria manifested such an ardent love of God, and such universal benevolence towards their fellow-creatures, that they were the admiration of the world, and afforded an example of the most exalted virtue to the rest of mankind. This, however, is mere illusion. That sacred spot was, it is true, a city of God, as it is denominated by Jerome, and yet that saint found the most dissolute characters concealed among the angelic beings by which it was inhabited. Less than thirty years after Palladius had visited these patterns of peace, virtue and happiness, we find them committing the most horrible excesses in the city of Alexandria.

The transactions to which I allude are circumstantially related by Socrates, who is esteemed the best ecclesiastical historian of those times, after Eusebius. St. Cyril, patriarch and bishop of Alexandria, a robber and assassin, was engaged in continual disputes with Orestes, the governor of the city. Cyril wished to assume the sole and supreme authority over Alexandria, but his preten-

sions were opposed by Orestes, and daily skirmishes took place in the streets of that capital. The clergy, the monks, and the greatest part of the populace sided with Cyril. Orestes, the imperial governor, was supported by the military and the most respectable citizens. The latter were commonly victorious. Their successes roused the fury of the monks and anachorets of the mountains of Nitria, who were, as it is natural to suppose, violent partizans of the holy patriarch.

Five hundred of these monks, one morning, issued forth from their solitary habitations to avenge the cause of God, that is, the cause of their infernal patriarch Cyril, against Orestes. No sooner had these fanatics reached Alexandria, than they met Orestes, proceeding through the city in his carriage, which they instantly surrounded. They dispersed his few attendants with stones, and loaded him with every kind of abuse, calling him an idolater and a heathen. Orestes replied, that he had been initiated by baptism into the christian faith. But a monk, named Ammonius, hoping to put a speedy termination to the contest between him and St. Cyril, threw a large stone at the head of Orestes, and the blood gushed copiously from the wound. Meanwhile, an alarm being given, the citizens hastened to the spot to rescue Orestes, and the monks of Nitria were compelled to a precipitate flight. The assassin Ammonius was, however, apprehended and carried before Orestes. After a legal trial he was condemned to the torture, and actually died on the rack. Cyril, who is still honored as a saint by the Romish church, himself pronounced a

funeral sermon over his body, and placed him in the number of the holy martyrs.

All Cyril's adherents, and particularly his body-guard the monks and the clergy, were highly incensed at the death of Ammonius, and resolved to take the most cruel vengeance. The victim of their fury was a friend of Orestes the most virtuous character in Alexandria, the female philosopher, Hypatia.

Hypatia was the admiration of her age, on account of her beauty, virtue, learning and understanding. Her father, Theon, a celebrated philosopher and mathematician of Alexandria, had been attentive to the early cultivation of her talents, and she surpassed in learning all her cotemporary philosophers. She received the public appointment of professor of philosophy and mathematics. She explained the works of Plato, Aristotle, and all the other sages of antiquity. Multitudes flocked from all quarters to Alexandria, to hear the beauteous Hypatia. She formed the minds of men, who, even in early youth obtained a brilliant reputation. The greatest philosophers of her time consulted her on the most difficult and intricate points in the platonic philosophy, mathematics and astronomy, and her answers were received with the deference paid to those of an oracle. Covered with the philosophic mantle, she sometimes appeared in the society of the great, with dignified confidence, but accompanied with the milder graces of distinguished modesty. Hypatia, for many years, enjoyed an extraordinary degree of universal esteem. Christians and heathens of the highest rank frequently visited her, to converse with her on literary topics

or subjects of particular importance; for her understanding was equal to her knowledge. On her part, she employed their influence to second her intercessions with the magistracy, in behalf of those whom she thought worthy of compassion. Orestes entertained the highest regard for Hypatia; like his predecessors he consulted her in every circumstance of difficulty, and implicitly followed her advice; he esteemed her above all the other inhabitants of Alexandria, and in her company he took the greatest delight. As the attempt upon the life of Orestes had failed, the monks and other partisans of Cyril resolved, however, to wound him in the most tender and sensible part. They, therefore, conspired the death of the amiable and innocent Hypatia, with a view to deprive the governor of the supreme felicity which he derived from her society and conversation.

Cyril gave the greater encouragement to the design, as he had long cherished in his bosom the most malignant envy of this celebrated female. Passing, one day, by the house of Hypatia, the haughty patriarch observed a great number of horses and carriages, stopping before her door, and enquired the cause. Being informed that they belonged to persons who came to visit the celebrated female philosopher Hypatia, Cyril's envy was inflamed to such a degree, says Suidas, that he vowed the death of Hypatia on the spot.

The tumult occasioned by the death of Ammonius favored the execution of this horrid resolve. As Hypatia was one day proceeding home, Peter, a christian ecclesiastic, subordinate to Cyril, at the

Atrocious murder of Hypatia by the monks.

head of a tumultuous mob, proposed to them to pull Hypatia out of her carriage. This proposal was no sooner made than executed. Hypatia was thrown upon the ground and thus dragged to the principal church of the city. There they stripped her beauteous person, carried her out again quite naked, began to mangle her limbs with sharp stones and to tear the flesh from her body. Hypatia endured these tortures with the utmost fortitude till she expired. But her death had not satisfied the fury of her more than brutal murderers. They tore her body in pieces, which, after dragging through all the streets of Alexandria, they threw together in a heap and burned. Such was the sacrifice, offered by the ferocious monks to the vengeance of the pious Cyril, in the year 419 of the christian era.

All the evils with which Solitude and fanaticism have afflicted the world, are small, when compared with the tenet adopted, in the fourth century, into the christian creed, that religious errors can only be extirpated by persecution, torments and death. By this theology the most atrocious crimes and the blackest enormities were justified and enjoined.

This doctrine, the offspring of hell and Solitude, was received and propagated with the greatest assiduity by the members of monastic institutions. Since that period, all the christian monks have been invariably directed by its destructive influence. This tenet has carried death and desolation over the whole surface of the globe; by its means the earth has every where reeked with the blood of slaughtered millions of its innocent inhabitants, and nations, now accounted the most civilized in Eu-

rope, were converted into savage blood-hounds and ferocious tigers. The aim of religion is to promote the happiness of mankind; but under the influence of this doctrine, the ministers of God, those whose duty enjoined them to preach the mild precepts of the Lamb, every where assumed the character of inhuman executioners.

Religious intolerance and a spirit of persecution are more easily instilled into the obdurate breasts of monks, and strike deeper root than any other passion. Every kind of enthusiasm and fanaticism is promoted by Solitude. The religious zeal which inflamed the mind of Mohammed, was, during his seclusion for a period of sixteen years, converted into fanaticism. The sufferings and persecutions he afterwards endured for twelve years, strengthened his superstitious frenzy; and during the ten which immediately succeeded, it was equalled only by his policy and ambition. Such was the foundation of Mohammed's religion and empire, and such was the foundation of the empire of the Vatican.*

* Even in modern times the court of Rome omits no opportunity of extending its empire. In October 1783, Monsignor Archetti, the papal nuncio at Petersburg was to invest the archbishop of Mohilow with the *pallium*; but the ceremony was deferred because the formula of the oath required by the nuncio of the archbishop, wanted nothing more than common sense. This formula, after promising obedience to the pope, and acknowledging him as the head of the church, runs thus: "I swear to persecute schismatics and heretics with all my power, and not to lay down my arms till they are totally extirpated." It is notorious that the Romish church regards all the adherents to the Greek

Controversy between the catholics and the Donatists.

At the commencement of the third century, many bishops were filled with astonishment at the first instance of the punishment of death being inflicted on a person accused of heresy. But, only one hundred years later, the greatest of all anachorets and monks, the hyper-orthodox Jerome was a persecutor---he, who in vindication of himself against Ruffinus, says: "At my instigation the emperor commanded the Origenists to be driven out of Alexandria and Egypt; by my advice the Roman pontiff condemned them; by my pen, the world, which had before so coolly read the writings of Origen, was inspired with the hatred of his doctrine,"---he, who says in another place: "All heretics must be consigned to Satan, in order to eradicate their dangerous opinions,"---he, who justly describes himself and his orthodox zeal, in the following words: "Dogs bark for their masters, and do you wish me not to bark for Christ's truth. To die would be easy to me, but to be silent impossible."

In the fourth century, a dispute concerning the election of a bishop kindled the flames of discord between the catholic party and the Donatists. A long controversy had been maintained on the two questions: in what manner a bishop ought to be ordained, and what was the characteristic of the true church? The catholic party maintained that to be the true church which comprehended the

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communion as schismatics. The papal nuncio, therefore, in fact, required, that the archbishop of Monilow, a subject of the Russian sceptre should take an oath, "to persecute all the Russians with all his power, and not to lay down his arms, till they were totally extirpated."

greatest number of kingdoms and nations; whereas, according to the Donatists, that only was the true church, which suffered no gross sinners and reprobates within its bosom. They were at length respectively convinced that there existed only one true church, namely their own, and that all who were not comprehended within its circle were doomed to eternal perdition.

Africa was convulsed by these controversies. The Donatist bishops having called to their aid a multitude of fanatical peasants, an engagement ensued in which they were defeated; and for thirteen years the Donatists were persecuted and slaughtered by the catholics.

The high idea of a church, which has been transmitted even to the present time, originated in the heated imagination of St. Augustine That word, denoting the invisible state, the pretended kingdom of God, fell like a thunderbolt from his glowing lips. He employed it to drive, if possible, all the sheep into one fold. Augustine, however, learned the difficulty of directing, at pleasure, those who are not inclined to listen and to obey, when the Donatists in Africa were driven to the utmost despair. After committing various extravagancies, those fanatics, at length, terminated their lives by suicide. They threw themselves in the way of passengers whom they threatened with instant death, if they refused to put a period to their misery. They profaned the temples of the heathen, in the hope of provoking them to vindicate the honor of their deities. They rushed impetuously before the tribunals of justice, expecting that the irritated judges would order their immediate execution;

and when all these methods failed, they precipitated themselves in great numbers into profound abysses.

Dulcitius, the governor of Africa, a man of a benevolent disposition, felt great concern at the continually increasing infatuation of the Donatists, and was at a loss how to act. He durst not manifest a disposition to favor them, for fear of offending the emperor, nor could he comply with his instructions, without augmenting the frenzy of those wretched fanatics. In this dilemma Dulcitius had recourse to a measure which many would not have adopted; he requested the advice of St. Augustine. The latter, considering the Donatists not as madmen, which they actually were, but as heretics, advised the governor to employ the utmost severity, as a sovereign remedy for their conversion. "It is better," said the holy man, "that a few Donatists should be burned, than that the whole blasphemous crew should suffer eternal torments in the flames of hell."

Rome's grandeur declined, and the barbarians desolated the empire, while its rulers, catching the fury of the church and of the monks, were intent only on the persecution of heretics. For the honor of God and the christian religion they were confined, banished, starved, scourged, or strangled. These senseless sovereigns trampled upon policy and humanity, merely out of love to the dry and barren opinions of intolerant orthodoxy.*

* In this orthodox age, all excepting the barbarians were strangers to toleration. The Goths never assumed the dominion over the consciences of others. Their ambassadors

Intolerance of Nestorius and Justinian.

Nestorius, the celebrated bishop and patriarch of Constantinople, in the first sermon which he preached before the emperor, promised that prince felicity on earth and a desirable place in heaven, if he would second his exertions for the extirpation of all heretics. Five days afterwards the patriarch made his first essay. He ordered the church of the Arians to be demolished, and thus drove them to such a pitch of fury and despair, that they themselves set fire to their church, and consumed it together with several contiguous buildings. Nestorius then persuaded the emperor to issue the most severe decrees against heretics, and had obtained such a reputation in consequence of his apostolic persecutions, that he would have become the greatest saint of the fifth century, had he not been himself soon afterwards condemned by the church as a heretic.

The emperor Justinian * was a wretched theologian and a cruel enemy of heretics. He issued the most violent edicts against all dissenters, whom he persecuted partly from blind zeal and partly from avarice. By means of his general, Belisarius, he

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declared to Belisarius, that they never compelled any person by menaces or by force to change his religion, but that every one was at liberty to believe whatever he pleased; their veneration for all sacred places was nevertheless as great as that of the Romans.

* Justinian, though celebrated for the code of laws digested during his reign, was, in fact, destitute of talents or attainments. He is denominated by Suidas an ignorant prince. But he had in his service men of great abilities, who in his name composed laws, edicts and epistles in a style of such elegance, gracefulness and dignity as is often wanting in the ordinances of other sovereigns.

laid waste Africa, where he destroyed the power of the Vandals, and obliged the Arians to conform to his own religious opinions. His consort, Theodora, took a lively interest in these pious proceedings. She was the daughter of a man who was bear-keeper to the amphitheatre, and before her elevation to the imperial throne, had been a prostitute by profession. Justinian received from the council of Constantinople the title of the most christian emperor; but not long afterwards his most christian majesty was declared a heretic;* notwithstanding which he continued, with a most christian spirit, to put to death and to confiscate the property of all those, whom he regarded as enemies to the orthodox faith. Justinian and Theodora are called by Procopius, " two devils incarnate, sent by God into the world as scourges of the human race."

Orthodoxy now became an irresistible weapon in the hands of arrogance, ignorance and superstition. Men were no longer taught; "thus you must act;" but the universal outcry was: "thus you must believe." Hanging and burning for the good of heretics and to promote the cause of God, became general in the christian church. Traitors, assassins and parricides were not burned alive; that punishment was reserved for heretics whose only fault it in general was, to think more rationally on matters of religion than their murderers.† The monks,

* In the great dispute on the question, whether the body of Christ was corruptible or incorruptible, Justinian joined the party that asserted its incorruptibility, which opinion was declared by the church to be heretical.

* Mendelssohn, one of the greatest writers of Germany,

the ecclesiastics and the popes unanimously declared, that no faith ought to be kept with heretics, and that even oaths sworn to them are not binding.

Orthodoxy ought to consist in a firm belief in those fundamental principles of religion, which ensure felicity in this world and in that which is to come. This, however, in general, is far from being the case. The orthodox christian is commonly intolerant; he hates his neighbor, and does not hesitate, if he has an opportunity, to plunge him into the lowest depths of misery, if his sentiments and opinions in religious matters differ from his own. The orthodox protestants and the heretical protestants hate each other as cordially as the catholics abhor both. By the rigidly orthodox of every persuasion all innovators in religion are regarded as heretics.

Controversies invariably tend to obscure the understandings of men, and to fill their hearts with hatred and malignity. Thus the disciples of St. Dominic armed themselves with fire to propagate their faith. Thus they sacrificed their fellow-creatures on blazing scaffolds to the Father of mercies, because they were destitute of the talents necessary to convince them.

Men of all classes and of all religions would, I

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says: "Look through the ranks of all those unfortunate men, whose amendment has been attempted by excommunication and persecution; reader, to whatever external church, synagogue or mosque you may belong, examine whether you will not find among those outcasts more genuine religion, than among the infinitely superior numbers of their persecutors."

admit, compel others to adopt their opinions if they possessed the power.* A difference of sentiment in religious matters is, in many protestant countries, persecuted as heresy. Orthodoxy varies with each succeeding age, and with every generation. Religion, alone, ever remains unchanged; theology is perishable; for religion proceeds from God, but theology is the invention of men.

All these prejudices concerning orthodoxy and heresy, were first generated by the imaginations of monks, and no situation cherished and promoted their growth like Solitude, because misanthropy no where finds more nourishment than in seclusion from mankind, and because the less we are acquainted with our fellow-creatures, the less we love them.

The black spirit of melancholy has ever established its throne in Solitude; there both soul and body become insensible. Can it be expected that the bosoms of fanatics, who are obliged reluctantly

* Ecclesiastics of all denominations were in the year 1783 addressed by a German Jew, (Mendelssohn) in the following impressive words: "Religion knows no compulsion. She does not rule mankind with an iron rod, but draws them with the cords of love. She is not armed with an avenging sword, nor does she promise any temporal advantages; she claims no right to earthly prosperity, or to external dominion over the consciences of men. Her weapons are demonstration and conviction, her dominion is the divine power of truth. The punishments which she threatens, are, like her rewards, the effects of love: they are salutary and beneficial even to the person on whom they are inflicted. By these tokens I recognize thee, offspring of the Deity, Religion, who alone canst dispense felicity either on earth or in heaven!"

to submit to privations and torments, can cherish the soft emotions of compassion and indulgence towards their fellow-creature? Hence cruelty and insensibility have always been distinguished features in the monastic character; for cruelty is the inseparable attendant on superstition and ignorance. The monks of Spain have even recently perpetrated a deed, worthy of the barbarism of the darkest ages, the circumstances of which must fill every humane mind with horror and astonishment. In the year 1781 a beautiful young female was burned at Seville on suspicion of an intrigue with the devil. To crown this infernal proceeding, the inquisition ordered the nose of the unfortunate victim to be cut off, two hours before her execution, in order to prevent those sentiments of compassion which her beauty might otherwise have excited.

We are, now, however, assuredly near that period, when the religion of Christ shall be restored to the purity by which it was distinguished, when it first emanated from its divine author; in which every individual, whether Catholic, Lutheran or Calvinist, will learn what is essential to his temporal and eternal happiness, will profess a religion of universal benevolence and love, a religion free from intolerance and a spirit of persecution, that improves the heart and affords consolation under every affliction.

That a savage and intolerant disposition is not always the consequence of Solitude is a truth that cannot be denied. But the education, mode of life and connections of a man have, invariably, a powerful influence upon his character and his manner of thinking, his passions, his virtues and

his vices. Solitude, the nurse and the inseparable companion of the monk, operates with the same force upon his manners and passions, as the intercourse with society upon the manners and passions of the man of the world. I am, however, ready to admit that many other causes besides Solitude contribute their aid to produce the general effect; aware that there is no passion of the human mind but what proceeds from a complication of circumstances.

Solitude, therefore, though not the only cause, was, doubtless, accessory to all the enormities and excesses of the anachorets and monks. Many of their passions and vices were evidently the effects of their intercourse with the world. All the evils brought by them upon states or families, proceed from the spirit that animates every genuine monk, from the ardor by which they are universally impelled, from the vapors that obscure their understandings, and from the barbarous discipline of monastic institutions. The impetuous passions of youth are there checked in their current, and an inhuman disposition is the natural result of inhumanity. The man who, in joyless seclusion from the world, is confined only to occupations which harass, confound and obscure the understanding; who, beneath the discipline of the convent, languishes away the prime of life, in lassitude and despair; if he ever attain the enjoyment of social intercourse, will rather bring vicious principles with him into society, than derive instruction from the failings of those characters whom he meets with in the world.

From the facts and observations contained in this

chapter, it therefore appears, that circumstances may exist, under which it is prejudicial to the mind to live in the seclusion of a petty village; that the recluse, possessing only his mantle and his hut, may feel the want of enjoyments from which he is cut off; that it is pernicious to associate only with the beasts of the desert, or to be condemned to incessant lassitude and melancholy, among the more dangerous monsters in monastic establishments.

CHAP. XII.

RETROSPECT AND CONCLUSION.

I WAS formerly reproached with being the most inveterate enemy of Solitude. It will now be objected with equal vehemence, that I am the too zealous panegyrist of retirement; that I preach a morality too severe, an elevation of soul unnecessary for temporal concerns, a contempt of mankind, a dangerous indifference towards all exterior advantages, a senseless tranquillity and firmness of mind, and an unjustifiable aversion from the world and society; by which I not only weaken the propensity to social intercourse, but increase the discontent of each individual. It will be said, that I call away every citizen of the world, every friend to convivial pleasures, from the street, the tavern and the gaming-table; that I excite in persons who were born to obey, not a willingness to perform the duties of their respective stations, but rather a pernicious desire to live according to their own pleasure; that I render them too philosophical, too pious and too independent. It will be urged, that by exaggerating the tranquil delights of retirement, I not only annihilate every social virtue, but destroy all regard for polished manners, urbanity, gallantry and *bon ton*, by the indifference which I create

towards the most exquisite pleasures of life, assemblies, clubs, and every other place of resort devoted to the interchange of sentiments and ideas.

It was far from being my intention to weaken social virtue in any bosom. The love of domestic felicity can assuredly not extinguish in the benevolent soul the concern for the general interest of society. Though a certain elevation of mind may create in the contemplative recluse an indifference towards the pleasures of the world, yet the same energetic mode of thinking, which renders many so serviceable, even in Solitude, fits them for a more extensive sphere of activity in social life. The more such a character exercises the powers of his mind in retirement, the more service he is afterwards capable of rendering to himself and to his fellow-creatures.

We cannot find the highest degree of felicity within ourselves. Our state of dependence and frailty tends to produce a union with some beloved object. It is not the intention of nature that we should be insulated; to be truly self-sufficient is the property of the Deity alone. It is therefore impossible to lead a life of continual seclusion, without experiencing from it some prejudicial effects.

Petrarch had long persisted in a life of solitary retirement. Had Laura been less unkind, he probably would never have retired to Vaucluse. Solitude alone was capable of compensating for the loss of Laura, and yet in the summer of life, the looks of his mistress decided his happiness and his misery, his pleasure and his pain. At the age of forty-two he was ashamed to find himself the captive of a female, who treated him with such cruel-

ty; he made several attempts to release himself from his fetters, but without success. Though he abhorred the court of Avignon, though the residence in that city was intolerable to him, yet the power by which he was attracted thither was too strong for his will. He was at length weary of his Solitude, which overwhelmed him with such lassitude and languor, that he could no longer endure to be alone. The celebrated hermit of Vaucluse suddenly plunged again into all the dissipations of fashionable life. The inhabitants of Avignon were astonished to see the surly misanthrope, who had taken delight only in the Solitude of the forest, appear all at once in every assembly and in every place of public diversion.

A person who passes his life in total seclusion must be a miserable creature.* To be able by medita-

* This general assertion of the author seems to be contradicted by the following particulars which have recently been made public, and which are too curious not to prove interesting to every reader.

Sarah Bishop, a native of the state of New York, in America, was a young lady of considerable beauty, who possessed the advantages of a good education, and a competent share of mental endowments. Fortune had likewise been liberal of her blessings; but being of a tender and delicate constitution, the state of her health was such as to require a constant recourse to medicine and careful attendance. She was often heard to say that she dreaded no animal on earth but man: her antipathy to society gradually increased, till, at the age of twenty-seven, she withdrew in complete disgust from the haunts of men, and retired in the bloom of life to the mountains in the vicinity of Salem. There secluded from the society of every living creature she has resided twenty-three years in the cleft of a rock.

This cleft appears to have been formed by some convul-

tion alone to banish the disagreeable sensation of perfect solitude, requires a strength of mind more than human, and an iron constitution. He who is

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sion of nature; a large fragment of the rock, about twelve feet square, lies in the front of a cavity from which it has evidently been rent, and partly incloses the mouth, thus forming an apartment of the same size as the fragment itself. Such is the rude habitation in which this recluse has passed twenty-three of her best years self-excluded from all society. She keeps no domestic animal, not even a fowl, a cat, or a dog. In front of her dwelling, and nearly surrounded by cliffs, is a gentle descent of rich and fertile ground, forming a square of about half an acre. This little plantation is cleared of its wood, and reduced to grass; but she makes little use of it, excepting that she has raised on it, a few peach-trees and annually plants a few beds of beans, cucumbers and potatoes. The whole plat is surrounded with a luxuriant growth of grape-vines, which overspread all the surrounding wood, and produce grapes in the greatest abundance. On the opposite side of her cave is a fine fountain of excellent water, which issues from the side of the mountain, and is lost in this place.

"At this fountain," says a traveller who visited her in November, 1804, "we found this extraordinary woman, whose appearance it is a little difficult to describe; indeed, like nature in its first state she was without form, that is, she appeared in no form or position I had ever seen before. Her dress appeared little else than one confused and shapeless mass of rags, patched together without any order, and entirely obscuring the human shape, excepting her head which was clothed with a luxuriancy of lank, grey hair, depending on every side, and wholly destitute of any artificial ornament or covering.

"When she discovered our approach, she exhibited the appearance of any wild and timid animal. She started, hastened with the utmost precipitation to her cave and barricaded the entrance with old shells pulled from the decayed trees. We advanced towards her humble mansion, and after some conversation we obtained liberty to remove the

not endowed with these qualifications, and is entirely separated from his fellow-creatures, is cut off from all aid, support and consolation. Nature herself

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palisades and look in, for we were not able to enter, the room being only sufficient to accommodate a single person. We conversed with her for some time and found that she possessed a sound mind, a religious turn of thought, and that she was perfectly happy and contented with her situation, as she has repeatedly testified to others who have in vain solicited her to quit this dreary abode. We saw no utensil either for labor or cookery, excepting an old pewter bason and a gourd-shell; no bed but the solid rock, unless it were a few rags scattered here and there upon it; no bed-clothes of any kind; nor the least appearance of any sort of food or of fire.

" She had indeed a place in one corner of her cell, where she occasionally kindles a fire, but it does not appear that she has had any there this year. To confirm this opinion, we were informed by a gentleman, that he passed her cell five or six days after the great fall of snow, in the beginning of March last, when she had no fire, and had not been out of her cave since the falling of the snow. How she subsists during the severe seasons is yet a mystery. She says she eats but little flesh of any kind, and it is difficult to imagine how she supports herself in winter. In the summer she subsists on the berries, nuts and roots which the mountains afford. It is possible she may secrete her winter store in some other fissure in the rock, more convenient for that purpose than the cell she inhabits.

" She keeps a bible with her, and says she takes great delight and spends much time in perusing and meditating on it. This woman is probably a sincere worshipper of God; if so, she is more rich, more wise and more happy than thousands in affluence and honor, who behold her with astonishment and scorn. At any rate, from this humble yet astonishing page of human nature, we read a most interesting lecture on the human heart. It was the peculiar state of this woman's heart which impelled her to forsake the society of mankind, and led her to this solitary mansion.

enjoins the union with a being of our own species; and has, by means of all our feelings indelibly impressed this law on our hearts. This everlasting truth is attested by the whole history of the celebrated recluses of Egypt and the East. He must entertain the utmost horror and detestation of his species, who, like a certain French monk, should construct a hermitage on Vesuvius, and prefer the neighborhood of that flaming abyss to the society of men.

No virtuous mind can entirely separate itself from human society. Without convulsions of the soul, such a person can never suppress the desire of rendering himself agreeable and useful to his fellow-creatures, of enjoying in their society the pleasures of truth and the blessings of life. Petrarch expresses himself with inimitable beauty and tenderness, when he says: "The mildness of my character always carries me back into the world from which my taste causes me to withdraw."

If man were even less necessary than he is to his fellow-creatures; if we actually expected to find in books all that is worthy of being known; if, therefore, we were to confine ourselves to study, regardless of the rest of the world, we should deprive ourselves of the advantage which may be derived from the intercourse of the wise and the experienced. Thus youth would be separated from age; the benefits of the most active Solitude would be

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The peculiar relish of the human heart will embrace solitude, dishonor, deformity and death itself, for happiness, while its antipathies can embitter a paradise of joy." T.

diminished by not associating occasionally with good company, and we should be nothing more than dull pedants and mere men of letters.*

* This idea has been admirably and energetically expressed by M. Mendelssohn in the following words: " We teach and instruct each other only in writing; we become acquainted with nature and mankind only by books; they afford us employment and recreation, amusement and delight. The divine does not converse with his congregation, he reads or declaims a written disquisition. The professor reads from his chair a written lecture. All is a dead letter, no where is to be found the spirit of living entertainment. It is in letters that we love and shew our anger; it is in letters that we quarrel and are reconciled; our whole intercourse consists of epistolary correspondence, and when we meet, we know no other amusement than playing or reading.

" Hence it is that man is become of scarcely any value to his fellow-creatures. The company of the wise is not sought, for we find their wisdom in books. The utmost that we do is, to encourage them to write, if we think they have not yet published enough. Respect is no longer paid to hoary age, for the beardless youth knows more from books than the former by experience. Whether he understands it or not, is of little consequence; it is sufficient that he knows it and that he can display his knowledge with more presumption than the venerable old man, who rather has the idea than the words at his command. We no longer comprehend, how the prophet could regard it as a dreadful evil, that youth should exalt itself above age; or how the Greek of old could prophecy the subversion of the state, because at a public assembly some wanton youths diverted themselves at the expence of an old man. We have no occasion for the man of experience, we want only his works. In a word, we are *litterati*, men of *letters*.

" This was not the case in the ages of antiquity. If we cannot say that things were then better, yet they certainly were different. Man was more necessary to his fellow-men; instruction was more intimately connected with example and observation with action. The ignorant were under the

Man is destined as well for social intercourse as for retirement.

Without the alternate intercourse with society and communion with himself, man is not capable of entirely fulfilling his destination, and of attaining to a certain degree of experience, wisdom and virtue.* A profound philosopher has observed with incontestible truth: " We can never completely ac-

necessity of following the steps of him who possessed experience; the disciple was obliged to seek the company of his master, and to observe him narrowly, in order to satisfy his desire of knowledge."

* Mr. Melmoth, the elegant author of Fitzosborne's Letters, observes: "That it is not good for man to be alone is true in more views of our species than one; and society gives strength to our reason and polish to our manners. The soul, when left entirely to her own solitary contemplations, is insensibly drawn by a sort of constitutional bias, which generally leads her opinions to the side of her inclinations. Hence it is that she contracts those peculiarities of reasoning and little habits of thinking, which so often confirm her in the most fantastical errors. But nothing is more likely to recover the mind from this false bent than the counter-warmth of impartial debate. Conversation opens our views and gives our faculties a more vigorous play; it puts us upon turning our notions on every side, and holds them up to a light that discovers those latent flaws which would probably have lain concealed in the gloom of unagitated abstraction. Accordingly one may remark, that most of those wild doctrines, which have been let loose upon the world, have generally owed their birth to persons, whose circumstances or dispositions have given them the fewest opportunities of canvassing their respective systems in the way of free and friendly debate. Had the authors of many an extravagant hypothesis discussed their principles in private circles ere they had given vent to them in public; the observation of Varro had never perhaps, been made (or never at least with so much justice,) that there is no opinion so absurd but has some philosopher or other to produce in its support." T.

complish the purpose of our existence, without the alternate converse with mankind and the converse with ourselves; without the gaiety of social life and the gravity of Solitude; without exercising a beneficial activity among many, and confining our whole attention to ourselves; without bustle and tranquillity; without dissipation and retirement from the pleasures of the world.

It is pleasing to be able to occupy our leisure with interesting ideas, to possess sources of felicity which are assured to us for ever, and render us independent of mankind; but it is nevertheless our duty to live also for society, and to take part in the pleasures and occupations of the busy world. The votary of Solitude indisputably enjoys mental delight superior to that of the man of business; but our conduct would be too selfish and displeasing to the Almighty, were we to renounce all social duties, in order to resign ourselves entirely to the intellectual pleasures of retirement. It would likewise be contrary to nature, were we to hope for uninterrupted enjoyment from the same object. All the pleasures of the world disgust if we drink of them too deeply. What once interested cannot always prove interesting, and the heart will not always long for what it once desired. We are weary of every thing when the body suffers by the gratification of the mind. A single grain of good-humor is of more value than all earthly pleasure, felicity, knowledge and glory; Philosophy therefore conducts us by the hand into the society of men, and teaches us, that an active life in the midst of our fellow-creatures is the purpose for which we are designed by nature, and that without its attainment

we can never possess substantial happiness, even with the highest intellectual accomplishments.

It was the intention of the Almighty himself, that we should live in communion with our fellow creatures; the strong propensity to social intercourse, which he has implanted in our nature, is an explicit declaration of his will. The most enlightened commentators on his precepts shew, that the frequent admonitions contained in the word of God relative to many social duties would be totally superfluous, were we enjoined, or even only permitted, to withdraw into total seclusion from the world, and, under the appearance of devotion, to pass our days in solitary indolence. The most enlightened divines assert, that the Saviour of the world refuted, both by practice and precept, those anachoretical principles which produce selfish egotists and misanthropes, but not virtuous members of society. The Redeemer himself taught us, by his example, only to withdraw at certain times into Solitude. He lived in society like other men, and enjoined his followers neither a life of seclusion nor of indolence. He retired occasionally from the world and conversed with God in Solitude, to teach us, that a christian should not suffer his mind to be continually occupied with the bustle and concerns of the world, and still less with its pleasures; but that he ought sometimes to withdraw from society and commune only with God and his own heart. Thus total seclusion from the world, so far from being as was formerly imagined, a state of the most perfect piety, is, excepting in very few instances, an abuse of religion.

The activity of social life and the favorite occu-

pations of retirement are intimately connected if we regard the amusements and pleasures of the world, as recreations from labor and care. Every thing is beneficial which tends to unite men, which renders them more enlightened, more wise, more virtuous, more affectionate and more confidential, by the communication of their sentiments and ideas; and in so far I set a high value on clubs and assemblies. Sensual pleasures should always be blended with intellectual, though the latter are more pure, more noble and more permanent than the former. From solitary speculations, it is necessary to pass to corporeal exercises and the diversion of the senses. There is probably none who has not experienced, that, by innocent amusements, the severity and extravagance of our opinions and manners lose their harshness. Cheerful society and a friendly entertainment, therefore, give virtue a gayer aspect and piety a more agreeable character; and both certainly gain many admirers amidst the enjoyment of a social glass.

We must not, then, withdraw into melancholy seclusion from society. We must not be disgusted with the vulgar sentiments and trivial ideas which are uttered in conversation; nor speak of interesting things if they interest only ourselves. We must be desirous only of imparting pleasure to others, and must listen to them with forbearance, however our understanding and imagination may suffer in the interval. We must, as much as possible, direct our attention to the persons, circumstances and objects with which the company is engaged; and then we shall assuredly obtain the reputation of being very amiable characters.

Every one is accounted amiable by those who are only solicitous to procure crowded assemblies. He who, without grumbling, loses his money at play to the lady of the house, is, in her eyes, the most excellent man in the whole town. Every superficial character is welcome to every assembly, because he, notwithstanding, occupies a place at the card-table. Even the elegant and fashionable female, who makes a point of being present at every route and every assembly, and is never subject to the attacks of languor but when she is obliged to spend the evening with her husband and children, does not act a more distinguished part at those places, than the ignorant coxcomb who, plodding through the same daily circle of official duty, consumes, in continual dissipation, those moments of leisure, which might be employed to so much better purpose in the improvement of his mind.

Some, however, there are, whose seclusion from society is perfectly justifiable. To increase the measure and the sphere of their utility, many are obliged to confine themselves to the retirement of their closets. These votaries of Solitude are sometimes forgiven by the advocates of social pleasures, and experience a friendly reception from many, even if they do not always appear where they were expected. What thousands require of an individual is not always of importance; but the conscience of every upright man will tell him what it is of the greatest consequence that he should each day perform. A person should not be compared to an owl, because he is fond of obscurity; many ardently seek the tranquillity of retirement which they are

however not suffered to enjoy.* Many shun the tumult of life, to employ themselves to a more beneficial purpose than they possibly can amidst the

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* On the interruption experienced in retirement from the the intrusions of visitors, the author of Fitzosborne's letters has the following lively and ingenious observations: "I have had occasion a thousand times since I saw you to wish myself in the land where all things are forgotten; at least that I did not live in the memory of certain restless mortals of your acquaintance, who are visitors by profession. The misfortune is, no retirement is so remote, nor sanctuary so sacred as to afford a protection from their impertinence: and though one were to fly to the desert and take refuge in the cells of saints and hermits, one should be alarmed with their unmeaning voice, crying even in the wilderness. They spread themselves, in truth, over the whole face of the land, and lay waste the fairest hours of conversation. For my own part (to speak of them in a style suitable to their taste and talents) I look upon them, not as paying visits, but visitations; and am never obliged to give audience to one of this species that I do not consider myself as under a judgment for those numberless hours, which I have spent in vain. If these sons and daughters of idleness and folly would be persuaded to enter into an exclusive society among themselves, the rest of the world might possess their moments unmolested; but nothing less will satisfy them than opening a general commerce and sailing into every port where choice or chance may drive them. Were we to live, indeed, to the years of the antediluvians, one might afford to resign some part of one's own time, in charitable relief of the insufferable weight of theirs; but since the days of man are shrunk into a few hasty revolutions of the sun, whole afternoons are too considerable a sacrifice to be offered up to tame civility. What heightens the contempt of this character, is, that they who have so much of the form, have always least of the power of friendship: and though they will "craze their chariot-wheels," as Milton expresses it, "to destroy your repose; they would not drive half the length of a street to assist your distress." T.

dissipations of society; but they return again into the bustle, if any useful observation can be made there. Many occupations can be prosecuted only in retirement; and many a writer is much more serviceable to his fellow-creatures by the solitary exercise of his pen, than if he were to pass his time in the most rigid attention to the duties of social life.

Literary retirement is a very honorable life, and enables the mind to exercise much greater powers than amidst the dissipations of the fashionable world. If the mental activity of any person be but directed to some useful object, the exercise of his powers is advantageous. He who is occupied in the instruction of youth, or devotes his time to the composition of any useful work, certainly maintains an intercourse with the world, and is often diligently employed for its benefit. However solitary and speculative his life may appear, however assiduously he may seek to disengage himself for a time from the employments and concerns of the world, he is in fact still engaged in the service of society, while he loudly proclaims from the retirement of his chamber what, amidst the restraints imposed by good manners, politeness and respect, he is obliged to conceal.

The solitary man of learning may laugh at that uninterrupted observance of all the little attentions, by which a man of the world renders himself agreeable to society.* He who is obliged to live much

* "Every man," says Helvetius, "absorbed in profound meditations, occupied with grand and general ideas, lives in the disregard of those attentions and the ignorance

in the world, cannot possibly fulfil the duties which an academic situation requires; but the professor who enjoys the tranquillity of retirement, who is relieved from the frivolous and insipid conversation which neither promotes the communication of ideas nor the flow of soul, but on the contrary debilitates the mind and destroys much valuable time; is likewise inclined to dispense with all those ceremonies and attentions, designed to give an exterior polish to society. But doubly honorable is the life of the collegian, who, even in the abodes of literature, has learned by acuteness of understanding and goodness of heart to win the affections of all his fellow-creatures.

Superficial people, indeed, regard all solitary men of letters as pedants. But you every where find, that pedants of a much more disgusting species, abound more in the midst of the world than in the seats of learning. You are continually accosted by professors of the law who entertain you with legal disquisitions, and by professors of physic whose mouths overflow concerning the subjects of their practice. Garve very justly tells us: "the

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of those customs, which constitute the science of the fashionable world, and which to him appear almost ridiculous. Few people of the world are sensible, that the knowledge of trifling things almost always implies an ignorance of those which are of importance; that every man who leads the same life as the rest of the world, has but ordinary ideas; that such a person never rises above mediocrity, and lastly that genius is always accompanied with an ardent desire of glory, which, rendering a man insensible to every species of desire, inflames his whole soul with the passion for distinguishing himself."

reason is, because none of these loquacious lawyers and physicians is master of himself; because each is swayed by a particular passion, or is possessed with certain ideas which are too powerful to be restrained, and burst forth without regard to the feelings and opinions of those who are present.

If, then, you have the misfortune to be attacked by one, whose whole conversation and whose every idea is absorbed by his own occupations and concerns, call to mind with patience and forbearance the charitable observation of Garve, who says: "such characters have lost that equilibrium in their souls, by which we ought always to regulate our words and actions according to circumstances and the persons with whom we have to do. As pedants and men passionately devoted to a particular subject, they disregard circumstances and think of nothing but themselves. They violate all the laws of decorum, in their total forgetfulness of every thing, excepting only the object of their passion."

An intercourse with company, untinctured with pedantry and prejudice, is of indisputable advantage. To men, who frequently and for a considerable time withdraw into Solitude, such society, and particularly the society of the powerful and the great, affords an opportunity of exercising themselves in the most manly philosophy of life. It requires far greater courage to tell a prince a bold truth to his face, than to commit one hundred such truths to writing. But in associating with the great, we should never forget the dangers attendant on such intercourse, particularly on account of the many little minds, whose envy is thus excited. We

should observe the precaution to say nothing, of the effect of which we are not certain. He who with a thorough knowledge of the world and mankind combines honesty and frankness, who despises artifice and scorns to do injustice or to injure any man, were it even in his power---such a person may sometimes speak a seasonable word before the powerful or the great, which may be productive of extensive benefit.

Great men, those who have performed great actions or are likely to become distinguished characters, are extremely interesting to every contemplative mind. It affords real delight to see how amiable even monarchs can render themselves, before whose frown millions of mortals tremble. What observer of men would not wish, that he had enjoyed the frequent opportunity of seeing and conversing familiarly with the youthful Cæsar, at the time when Sylla said of him: "Trust not that youth, whose conduct now appears so unassuming; I see in him many Mariuses." The observation of the great qualities, by which a single monarch forms epochas in his age and becomes a model to posterity, or the early dawn of uncommon powers, must be truly interesting; and what philanthropist does not rejoice when he perceives, that those energies are accompanied with tender sensibility and the soft feelings of humanity!

The society of persons of high rank should neither be feared nor shunned; for, in Germany, at least, the superior classes contain the greatest number of amiable persons. That man, on the other hand, is an object of the utmost scorn and contempt, who courts the company of the great, who

honors and esteems them merely on account of their birth and rank, and because it flatters his pitiful vanity.

We shall, therefore, enjoy the advantages of retirement and of social life, when in the former we pass our days according to the dictates of our consciences, and in the latter with judgment and dignity; when we support our parts well in both; when we correct the disadvantages of Solitude by social intercourse and the prejudicial influence of society by retirement. But neither Solitude nor social life should be extravagantly praised, or exclusively recommended. In both we may render ourselves totally superfluous to the world; in the former by selfish indolence, in the latter by unmeaning activity. In both it is the duty of man to render himself as useful as possible; like the placid river, which not only winds through solitary vallies, amidst flocks and herds, but likewise visits in its course populous cities, to which it is at the same time an ornament and an advantage.

The speculative and the active life would equally contribute to the happiness of society, if each individual were placed in the situation to which he is suited. The first and last object of life is to be happy; it is consequently the duty of each to procure every possible advantage for himself, and likewise to confer all the good he can on others. But through chance and circumstances many are doomed to move in a sphere to which they are not fitted. Many, who would act a distinguished part in the highest circles, languish away their lives amidst the dullness of a small town. Many, on the contrary, whose rank and influence make them conspi-

cuous characters, have just reason to conceal themselves from the observation of all the world.

Persons, who, in the metropolis, diffused life on all around them, who inspired the dull with gaiety and the dejected with courage, are often condemned to a dismal and dreary life of retirement. How gloomy are the days of the accomplished female, amidst a life of rural Solitude, if her husband is insensible to the excellent qualities of her mind and heart, if she has none with whom she can converse, none to listen to her complaints and sympathize in her sorrows! But how happy on the other hand is she, who without fixing her mind on any particular situation, is satisfied with every thing, and consequently finds tranquillity in the exercise of her duty, discovers charms in the barren heath, and flowers among thorns!

If we employ to the best advantage every situation in which Providence has placed us, we shall easily find consolation in Solitude and pleasure in society. Retirement supplies all that is wanting in social life. Every society, however unsuitable to our tastes, furnishes materials for reflection, new ideas, new images, and even by the inactivity of our powers, an addition of mental energy. Go into society; go with reluctance if you cannot overcome it; resign yourself to some innocent levity, accept every flower that is presented to you, however insignificant. By these means cheerfulness and good-humor are again restored to the heart, and the mind is enabled to return to serious meditation and severer labors.

In many respects, the advantages procured by a life of social intercourse, and those enjoyed in a life

of Solitude, are exactly balanced. A very great man (Lord Chancellor Bacon) was of opinion, that God and his angels only had a right to be mere spectators in this world; and that we ought therefore entirely to reject the speculative life, in as far as it is confined only to itself, and diffuses neither light nor heat in human society. But how indulgent we are inclined to be towards the most selfish recluse, who only employs himself in the exercise of his intellectual faculties, to whom it is of some importance, that he possesses a soul which fills up the vacuity of leisure and retirement; when we reflect how men of the world abuse the propensity to sensual pleasures; when we see how, in the pursuit of them, they lose all attention and all sensibility to concerns of importance; how all the energy of their minds is relaxed and dissipated; how empty, how superficial, how insipid, is all that they think and say; how difficult it is for the mind, enervated in the soft lap of indolence, to attain to intellectual dignity; how reluctantly it collects its scattered ideas and concentrates its powers, to proceed with ardor in the honorable career of virtue, art or science. If it be asserted, that to do well is better than to think well; that occupations which tend to the general benefit of society are preferable to that employment of the understanding and those investigations which are undertaken for our private amusement; that a magnanimous sacrifice of our talents to the benefit of others is more meritorious than the highest personal enjoyment; it cannot, however, be denied that much benefit results from our retirement, if we there properly prepare ourselves for active life. Man is equally capable of

thinking and of acting; he was therefore made for a speculative, as well as for an active life; but with the intention that he should exercise himself in both, and be able to fulfil in both the design of the Almighty. A total aversion to all society would therefore accord as little with the true spirit of philosophy, as an unreserved antipathy against Solitude. We must alternately be satiated with both in order to enjoy both.

The propensity to Solitude appears to be justified, when it procures tranquillity for the heart. But when we neither possess this in the world nor enjoy it in Solitude, then it is evident that there is something wrong in the soul, and then reason disowns this inclination.

If discontent and disgust with mankind drive us into Solitude, and we there forget our dissatisfaction and our ill-humor, the propensity which we followed is right. This is the case, when in retirement we employ ourselves in some useful undertaking. But when we carry with us into Solitude the world which we have forsaken, when our discontent at all that we see and hear accompanies us into retirement, we lose in philanthropy what we perhaps gain in experience; and though our flight from society be justifiable, yet it affords no repose.

Even if you feel the strongest aversion to those by whom you are surrounded, you should not always shun their society. The less you see of your fellow-creatures the more strength your unhappy antipathy obtains, and the more certainly you will become a misanthrope. If, on the contrary, you do not entirely avoid the society of mankind, you will have numerous opportunities of discovering a

good side in many individuals, with whom you were before not sufficiently acquainted; you will acquire a love and respect for many, whom in the retirement of your chamber you regarded as undeserving of your esteem. We ought, therefore, never to strive more to go into society than when the effort is attended with the greatest violence to our feelings. He, who appears in society with an unprejudiced mind and a benevolent heart, frequently returns from it with tranquillity and content.

It is far from my intention to sow the seeds of misanthropy, when I say that this or the other cause produces an anti-social disposition. That portion of this work, which relates to the motives of Solitude, contains the history of many a melancholy disease of the soul; and if I have formed an accurate opinion concerning those maladies, the remedies which I propose may probably not be without success.

Mutual antipathy and disgust have fixed an impassable barrier between different classes of society, in many of the German provinces, where, in the choice of company rank and family alone are considered, while superior talents and qualifications are totally disregarded. There many a right honorable lady dreads no disgrace, nor even death itself so much as to be seen in company with people who are not of family; but she has no repugnance to a private intrigue with her footman. Such characters leave their houses and their homes; they abandon cities, seated in the most fertile and delightful countries, in which the arts and sciences flourish, in which commerce diffuses opulence, luxury and all that can gratify the senses, in order

to shun the public intercourse with persons of inferior condition. This silly vanity excites in the latter a far more noble pride. Each party avoid every place where they meet only with objects of aversion. But when these mutual, unpleasing impressions, instead of being immediately effaced, produce a permanent antipathy; when this antipathy is converted into hatred and detestation, the bosom is inflamed with passions which neither God nor any good man can approve. In general, if, though we have not conceived a hatred against the society which we shun, we yet give way to peevish discontent with the deficiencies of that society, our hearts are filled with continually increasing aversion, till at length we are completely overwhelmed with melancholy and misanthropy.

On this subject a celebrated English writer* observes with equal justice and penetration: "Society merely as society, without any particular heightenings, gives us no positive pleasure in the enjoyment; but absolute and entire Solitude, that is, the total and perpetual exclusion from all society is as great a positive pain as can almost be conceived. Therefore in the balance between general society and the pain of absolute Solitude, pain is the predominant idea. But the pleasure of any particular social enjoyment outweighs very considerably the uneasiness caused by the want of that particular enjoyment; so that the strongest sensations relative to the habitudes of particular society are sensations of pleasure. Good company, lively conversations and the endearments of friendship, fill the mind

*Burke, on the Sublime and Beautiful.

with a great pleasure; a temporary Solitude, on the other hand, is itself agreeable. This may perhaps prove that we are creatures designed for contemplation as well as action; since Solitude as well as society has its pleasures; as from the former observation we may discern, that an entire life of Solitude contradicts the purposes of our being, since death itself is scarcely an idea of more terror."

We should, therefore, live like citizens of the world and do as much good as we are able, among mankind; still retaining the liberty of seeking retirement as often as we think fit, and of withdrawing from the bustle of society and the general pursuit of sensual pleasures. Let us boldly resolve to live according to our own taste and to seclude ourselves from society at the first beck of reason. Let us leave the ceremonious visit, the distribution of complimentary cards, and other important occupations of that kind to those who are incapable of any better employment. He who can enjoy satisfaction within the circle of his own family, adopts a plan of domestic pleasures and duties, for which he wants the aid of no other persons, and which are sufficient to preserve him from the attacks of languor, because they afford incessant occupation to his understanding and imagination.

Total seclusion is, however, sometimes the highest enjoyment to those who resign themselves entirely to the influence of the imagination, and consequently live in a world different in every respect from that which surrounds them. This felicity is the portion of but few. By the world it is denomi-

nated madness, but the world very frequently knows not what it says.

In estimating the comparative value of a speculative and an active life, if we reflect on the virtues which spring forth in the former and lie dormant in the latter, we shall certainly be induced to give the preference to Solitude, on account of the courage which it inspires and the strength which it imparts to the character.

In many of the provinces of Germany, where the nobility even still afford a very limited access to personal merit; where superstitious veneration for the advantages of birth debases the man; where the nobility imagine and give you to understand that an impassable gulph separates them from the other classes of society; where the popular character bears the stamp of this acknowledged distinction of rank; where from their infancy sentiments of pride are instilled into the great, while the principles of submission are inculcated on the minds of their inferiors; where the nobles not only seize every opportunity of displaying their advantages, but where nothing flatters the lower classes so much as the gracious notice of the great; this produces incessant arrogance on the one side and incessant envy on the other.

It likewise excites such an extravagant desire of rank, that many an individual, out of the inferior classes does not seek to elevate himself by his talents, is not solicitous that his thoughts and actions should be distinguished by superior courage, dignity and virtue, but contents himself with the purchase of a patent of nobility. All this tends to debase the man, and to deprive him of that eleva-

tion of mind, which prevents him from lusting after false honor, causes him to regard every man as his equal, and birth and titles as accidental and inconsiderable advantages. Boldness and courage is doubtless the result of the consciousness of talents or merit, as well as the consequence of high birth and a distinguished name. This quality cannot be possessed by those, who have always been subject to the oppression of the prejudices of which I am speaking; they must fawn and cringe till they obtain what others have it in their power to refuse them.

A man who possesses not the consciousness of his own dignity, sinks into the most wretched and most impotent of mortals, in the unhappy moment when he imagines that he has incurred the displeasure of his titled superior. How different on the contrary are the feelings, how free and independent are the movements of him, who has learned in a land of freedom, or in early retirement from the world, to estimate such persons and their advantages only according to their intrinsic value!

Strength of character is acquired in retirement, but the ability to apply that strength, is, notwithstanding all the advantages of Solitude, obtained only in the world. Courage is the most necessary quality in life. The votary of Solitude probably acts with greater courage than the man of the world, but he has not the dexterity to execute spirited resolutions with success. Solitude imparts the simplicity of the dove, but not the wisdom of the serpent. It is not sufficient to be able to look boldly in the faces of those before whom others tremble: it is likewise necessary to be acquainted with the

science of gaining their hearts; to know how to discover the artifices of envy, its intentions, hopes and evasions; and to detect the stratagems of all those, who never scruple to destroy the plans of others in order to promote their private views. The solitary man, unacquainted with the world, proceeds straight forward; the man of the world, knows on the contrary when to stand still, and when to follow up his design, and waits with patience till he has a favorable opportunity for its execution.

In many respects, however, Solitude, when judiciously employed, instead of rendering a person incapable of the concerns of social life, actually fits him for their performance. Indolence and voluptuousness are too often the concomitants of fashionable life, and neither of them ever produced any thing great. We have recently seen ministers entrusted with the most important duties of the state, to which they daily devoted not more than an hour. The remainder of their time was either devoted to anxious endeavors to secure themselves from the attacks of their rivals, or consumed in the pleasures of the table or the voluptuous delights of love. In such hands the safety of the most powerful empire is endangered; tremendous revolutions may arise from the neglect of a favorable moment. Delay is the ruin of every kind of business.*

* None was more sensible of this truth than William Pitt, the late earl of Chatham. In the successful war in which England was engaged with France and Spain during his administration, he once sent to inform the officers at the head of the different departments, that a certain number of ships,

Anecdote of the late Lord Chatham.

A minister, it is true, is but a man, and every one has not the energy necessary to inspire others

so many land-forces and a proportionate quantity of artillery and stores would be wanted for a secret expedition, by a day which he specified. All these different officers, however, returned the minister the same answer; they all informed him that what he required was impossible.

It was late at night when Pitt received this answer. He immediately sent for his secretary, inveighed bitterly against the king's servants on account of the predicament in which he was placed by their ignorance and negligence, and said to his secretary: " Mr. Wood, I charge you to go immediately to Lord Anson. You must not look for him at the Admiralty; he is not to be found there. Go to the gaming-house, and tell him in my name, that I will immediately impeach him if he does not execute, without delay, the commands of government transmitted through my hands: From him go to Lord Ligonier, and should his bed be filled with prostitutes, tear aside the curtains and repeat the same message to him. Then proceed to Sir Charles Frederick's, and assure him that if he does not comply with his majesty's commands, they shall be the last that he will receive."

Mr. Wood, accordingly went to White's and delivered his message to Lord Anson, the first lord of the admiralty. The latter immediately declared that Pitt was a fool, and he could not accomplish what he required. "However, (continued Anson) as it is necessary to return an answer even to a madman, tell the secretary of state I will do my utmost to satisfy him."

From him Wood went to Lord Ligonier, the commander-in-chief of the army, who likewise said, it was impossible, as Pitt very well knew. "Yet," added the veteran, "Pitt has a right to require of us what we are able to perform; assure him that whatever is possible shall be done.

The secretary then proceeded to Sir Charles Frederick, the master of the ordnance. After some consideration, the latter was sensible that Pitt's orders might be executed within the time specified.

In a word the fleet, the army, the artillery, and stores

with zeal for the service in which they are engaged, to require the utmost exertion of their powers, and to inflict immediate punishment on the dilatory. Even philosophers permit the gratification of the senses, in order to dissipate the cares of business, and to enable the mind to proceed with augmented vigor to new enterprizes.

These philosophers have probably not reflected that there are superior pleasures, recreations of a nobler kind and equally adapted to the nature of man, which completely refresh him, which restore the heart to perfect happiness, and excite renewed ardor and energy for business. Cicero had devoted the greatest part of his youth to the sciences, in order to form himself for public employments. In his maturer years, when he was engaged in the service of the state, and filled the highest offices in the commonwealth, he still resigned to them every moment of leisure left him by the business of the republic and that of his friends. These intervals he passed in reading, as they were too short and too turbulent for the exercise of his pen. There are few great ministers, who in like manner have not occasionally a quarter of an hour of which they are masters; for nobody, at least such is the assertion of Lord Chancellor Bacon, is so involved in business, as not to find intervals of leisure, in which he can wait the return of energy and warmth. The question, therefore, is reduced to this: Are intervals of leisure employed to more advantage in the improvement of the

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were ready, in spite of all impossibilities, by the time which Pitt had appointed.

mind or in the bosom of voluptuousness; in the elevation of the soul, or the gratification of the senses?

Religion has even afforded recreation to statesmen amidst the greatest pressure of public affairs. I know that even at the present day there are ministers, distinguished for the faithful discharge of their duties, who each morning and evening, before they begin the business of the day, or after they have concluded it, retire for a longer or shorter interval to collect their thoughts, to take a retrospect of their lives, and to meditate alone, on the most weighty and important of all concerns. A minister who combines religious contemplation with the duties of his station always remains tranquil and the master of himself. He is not carried away and engulphed by the vortex of turbulent politics; but leaves the sacred retirement in which his soul was attached to higher objects, with sentiments that cheer and expand the heart, and with manly tranquillity; invigorated by the principles which he there adopted, prepared for every contingency, and elevated above all the petty intrigues of shallow courtiers.

As those invested with the highest offices are able to employ their leisure to invigorate and elevate their minds and hearts, so, likewise, may he who is placed in an inferior station, if, in his intervals of leisure he withdraws with sufficient perseverance from the tumult of society. It is then only that he can duly reflect on what he daily observes and experiences; and that he can adopt principles to guide the future conduct of his life. The watchfulness of the crafty and designing makes him vigi-

lant over himself, inures him to constancy and excites his courage. The envious render him wary and reserved amidst success; and they jointly contribute to dispel all fear of the censure of mankind. But many bad men are at the same time so contemptible, that the mere reflection on their littleness and insignificance is sufficient to habituate you to such elevation of soul, that you are enabled with tranquil composure, and without any repugnance, to associate with your most inveterate enemies.

He who dreads the censures of every rogue and fool he meets with, lives without advantage and dies without honor. The censures of the world produce no painful or disagreeable sensation in the mind of him, who has sufficient leisure and repose to place them in the balance, and then to consign them to oblivion.

The power of being virtuous is much more easily preserved in Solitude than in the world. A man may possess great talents and attainments, his resolutions may be virtuous, but yet the weakness of his character may destroy all their effect, and prevent the accomplishment of any great or virtuous action. A female philosopher of twenty, a lady of exquisite beauty, once said to me at Bern: "I am much less afraid of the baneful influence of Solitude than of the prejudicial effects of the great world, the least of which is a pliancy and flexibility that gradually eradicates every virtuous sentiment from the heart. Never, (added she) was I only for a fortnight amidst the fashionable circle of Bern without feeling all my virtuous inclinations considerably weakened."

Solitude, therefore, is undeniably advantageous

for strengthening our religious sentiments. Solitude, like religion, leads to tranquillity of mind, to the patient endurance of misfortune, and to the undaunted expectation of futurity; and he, who possesses not religion, says a great philosopher, in him the view of all the grandeur of nature excites no impulse to a virtuous life.* Hence it was found

* That the view of the beauties of nature, in rural retirement tends to inspire sentiments of religion and virtue, we find exemplified in an amiable philosopher of our own country, the author of Fitzosborne's Letters. In one of these is an exquisitely beautiful passage to that effect, which I cannot deny myself the pleasure of quoting.

"I was in my garden this morning somewhat earlier than usual, when the sun, as Milton describes him,

'With wheels yet hov'ring o'er the ocean brim
'Shot parallel to th' earth his dewy ray.'

There is something in the opening of the dawn at this season of the year, that enlivens the mind with a sort of cheerful seriousness, and fills it with a certain calm rapture in the consciousness of its existence. For my own part at least, the rising of the sun has the same effect on me, as it is said to have had on the celebrated statue of Memnon: and I never observe that glorious luminary breaking forth that I do not find myself harmonized for the whole of the day.

"While I was enjoying the freshness and tranquillity of this early season, and considering the many reasons I had to join in offering up that morning incense, which the poet I just now mentioned represents as particularly arising at this hour from the earth's great altar; I could not but esteem it as a principal blessing that I was entering upon a new day with health and spirits. To awake with recruited vigor for the transactions of life, is a mercy so generally dispensed, that it passes like other the ordinary bounties of Providence without making a due impression. Yet, were one never to rise under these happy circumstances, without reflecting what numbers there are, who (to use the language

in every age, that Solitude was the sanctuary of religion, and that in retirement its energy was most powerfully experienced. Hence divines, equally distinguished for profound philosophy and uncommon piety, testify, that in Solitude the soul is elevated by the constant meditation on its duties to the Almighty; that there the tears of tribulation are dried from our eyes, and not a sigh ascends to heaven in vain; that there the soul is dissolved in all the tenderness of devotion before him by whom it was created and redeemed. Even the Savior of the world, who had less occasion for the aid of religious Solitude, afforded, by his own example, the strongest testimony to this truth; for he frequently sought the lonely garden, the solitary mountain and the silence of night, to hold converse with heaven.

In Solitude, many a conflict in the cause of virtue is crowned with success, many a generous propensity is acquired, and many a temptation withstood. How often, likewise, are indolence and supineness there overcome! Those who always ex-

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of the most pathetic of authors) when they said, "My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint," were like him, "full of tossings to and fro, unto the dawning of the day," or "scared with dreams and terrified through visions"—were one to consider I say how many pass their nights in all the horrors of a disturbed imagination, or all the wakefulness of real pains, one could not find one's self exempt from such uneasy slumbers or such terrible vigils, without double satisfaction and gratitude. There is nothing indeed tends to render a man contented with that draught of life which is poured out to himself, than thus to reflect on those more bitter ingredients which are sometimes mingled in the cup of others." T.

claim, " Alas, it is his habit;" prove that they are ignorant of what man is capable of effecting if he pleases. Because it is his habit, he must endeavor to shake it off, and rouse himself to active exertions. Supineness, imbecillity, disgust of himself and of existence,* must not prevent him from rush-

* " I am persuaded," says Mr. Melmoth, " this disgust of life is frequently indulged out of a principle of mere vanity. It is esteemed as a mark of uncommon refinement, and as placing a man above the ordinary level of his species, to seem superior to the vulgar feelings of happiness. True good sense, however, most certainly consists, not in despising but in managing, our stock of life to the best advantage; as a cheerful acquiescence in the measures of Providence is one of the strongest symptoms of a well-constituted mind. Self-weariness is a circumstance that ever attends folly; and to contemn our being is the greatest, and indeed the peculiar infirmity of human nature. It is a noble sentiment which Tully puts into the mouth of Cato in his treatise on old age: *Non lubet mihi* (says that venerable Roman) *deplorare vitam, quod multi, et ii docti, sæpe fecerunt; neque me vixisse pænitet: quoniam ita vixi, ut non frustra me natum existimem.*

It is in the power indeed of but a very small proportion of mankind, to act the same glorious part that afforded such high satisfaction to this distinguished patriot: but the number is yet far more inconsiderable of those, who cannot, in any station, secure to themselves a sufficient fund of complacency to render life justly valuable. Who is it that is placed out of the reach of the highest of all gratifications, those of the generous affections; and that cannot provide for his own happiness by contributing something to the welfare of others? As this disease of the mind generally breaks out with most violence in those who are supposed to be endowed with a greater delicacy of taste and reason than is the usual allotment of their fellow-creatures; one may ask them whether there is any satiety in the pursuits of useful knowledge? or if one can ever be weary of benefiting

ing out of the bed of indolence, to a virtuous conflict with himself. With courage we may frequently overcome bodily infirmities and occupy our minds with some useful employment, if we can but believe that we possess sufficient power. With what pleasing emotions we then survey the progress of our labors, which were undertaken only to repel the intrusions of lassitude and indolence! We must not relinquish every undertaking which we are not immediately able to accomplish. Great difficulties are, in the end, always overcome by constancy and perseverance.

Considering all things, Solitude is injurious to human society only in the abuse; in itself it is neither detrimental nor dangerous. It is neither more nor less prejudicial than any other advantage

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mankind? Will not the fine arts supply a lasting feast to the mind? Or can there be wanting a pleasurable employment so long as there remains even one advantageous truth to be discovered or confirmed? To complain that life has no joys while there is a single creature whom we can relieve by our bounty, assist by our counsels or enliven by our presence, is to lament the loss of that which we possess and is just as rational as to die of thirst with the cup in our hands. But the misfortune is, when a man is settled into a habit of receiving all his pleasures from the mere selfish indulgences, he wears out of his mind the relish of every nobler enjoyment, at the same time that his powers of the sensual kind are growing more languid by each repetition. It is no wonder, therefore, he should fill up the number of his gratifications, long before he has completed the circle of his duration, and either wretchedly sit down the remainder of his days in discontent, or rashly throw them up in despair." *Fitzosborne's Letters.* T.

that is misapplied, than the sciences, fire, water, routes and assemblies.

All the prejudicial effects of Solitude may be admitted without in the least diminishing or weakening what may be said in its favor. We must acknowledge without the smallest hesitation, that many lead in Solitude a life marked only by indolence and vice; that their thoughts are occupied with subjects which they would be ashamed to confess; that ambition and avarice, sometimes the grossest passions, and at others the most insignificant trifles principally contribute to their inclination for Solitude; that they bring with them into retirement the world and all its vices, and that even when they appear to be alone, they are yet living in the midst of dissipation. These things, though a heavy charge against such characters, are no argument against Solitude.

" Solitude," says Klopstock, " holds in her right hand a cup of pleasure, and in the left a flaming dagger; the former she presents to the happy, and the latter to the afflicted." This, I however, deny. Solitude likewise presents her cup of pleasure to the sufferer, but reserves the flaming dagger for the extravagant fanatic or the slave of unbridled passion. Retirement is very often a dagger to the lover, but it is always nectar in the chalice of philosophy.

It is possible to live in the utmost seclusion and yet not to be entirely without social relations. Man excluded from all connection with his fellow-creatures would neither be able to fulfil his duty toward himself and the great Author of his existence, nor his duty to his neighbor, and consequently could

not long remain in his wretched condition without feeling his misery. But it is likewise an invariable truth, that in Solitude we are as negligent of the most important concerns of ourselves or our friends, as in the converse with society we are attentive to both.

There is therefore a kind of society which is not incompatible with the most rigid seclusion from the world. One of the greatest and wisest divines, a man in whose words implicit confidence may be reposed, because his practice is perfectly consistent with his precepts, my beloved and valued friend, Spalding, declares in his sermon on Solitude, from which I have often derived great benefit, "that, a society in which we can utter our thoughts as freely as in the retirement of our closet before God; in which rational piety, cheerfulness, candor and confidence are united; which does not with surly severity exclude conversation on subjects of inferior consequence, provided it be not prejudicial to truth and virtue; whose pleasures are heightened and enhanced by being accompanied with innocence and devotion;—a life passed amidst society of this kind is so far from being incompatible with christian seclusion, that they are rather of mutual assistance to each other, every thing in both eventually tending to one common object."

He who possesses such friends as his heart desires and deserves will share every thing with them, both the advantage he derives from his observations on the world, and the treasures which, amidst silent contemplation, he collects in Solitude. Never will he be hurried along by the tumult and dissipation of society, never will the generous feelings

of his soul be checked in Solitude. Of this the heart of Petrarch was deeply sensible, when he said: "What superior felicity can a man picture to himself than to associate with friends of approved fidelity and attachment, with whom he can think aloud, who have but one soul and one will? Can any thing be more agreeable than countenances perpetually serene, souls ever in unison and hearts continually open? What is sweeter than a society swayed by truth, free from restraint, reserve, and false embellishments? Such a life is the object of all my wishes, and if I can attain it, I shall not envy any man."

All the advantages of rural retirement may likewise be enjoyed even by those who reside amidst the bustle of the metropolis. When Petrarch lived in cities, he was fond of rambling abroad; he courted retirement in the depth of the forest and the lonely valley; and these walks frequently enkindled his poetic fire, or gave birth to great philosophical and political ideas. When he was once at Parma, he was received with the highest distinction by the principal persons of that city, and particularly the family of Corregio; but Petrarch was not a philosopher who was ambitious of the society of the great: for he was soon sensible that the great as frequently experience languor in the company of the philosopher as he in theirs. He therefore stole every moment that he could, in order to ramble about the country, which constituted his highest delight. In the midst of Parma, such was his ardent desire of rural pleasures and of retirement, that he sought for a small house in a lonely situation where he could live secure from the tumult and bustle of the city.

Such a retreat he discovered in Parma itself; contiguous to it was a garden, and this garden was watered by a brook. From this place he wrote to his friends: "I enjoy the country in the midst of the city, and the city in the midst of the country. If I am weary of Solitude, I need only to go out and immediately find society; when I am satiated with society, I return to my humble abode, and there find retirement. I there enjoy a tranquillity to which the philosophers of Athens, the poets on their Parnassus and the anachorets in the desert were perfect strangers. May I only be exempted from the visitations of worldly prosperity: may honors and riches rather crown the wishes of the servile attendants of a court and flee the man who conceals himself from them!"

Petrarch it is true, never speaks but in the language of poetry; but there is none, who, in a similar situation, might not equally think and feel what is expressed by Petrarch.

Rousseau was so tenderly attached to his cat because she had a will of her own, that is, because she never came when he called her.* But he who is

* Numerous observations on Rousseau's character as an author and a man occur in the volumes of Zimmermann. The reader will not be displeased to have an opportunity of comparing our author's sentiments concerning the philosopher of Geneva, with those of another distinguished writer of Germany.

"There cannot be, (says M. Garve,) a more striking instance of the misanthropy and love of seclusion produced by a desire which some conceive, not only of being esteemed but tenderly beloved by those with whom they associate, than was afforded by Rousseau. None ever enjoyed such

deprived of his liberty in Solitude, must have recourse to the consolation, with which Madame de Stael supported herself in the Bastille. " In prison," says this lady, " we have not our will, but we are

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an opportunity of living in the most agreeable circles of the most social metropolis, none was ever more sought by good company, and probably none of the great writers of France possessed, so soon after the first fruits of his genius were known, so many real friends. He was likewise fond of society and probably valued too highly the society of the great. We see in his Confessions how he was flattered to play at chess with a Condé, and to be visited by a Montmorency.

" What then deprived him of all these friends? What plunged him by degrees into such profound misanthropy, that he at first buried himself in deserts, and afterwards in a garret at Paris, where, wishing to be forgotten by the world, he refused admittance to all?

" Many causes concurred in producing this effect: and of these the following certainly was one. He was a man whose sensibility was as excessive as many of his ideas were extravagant, who wished not merely to be admired by all those with whom he associated, (though in this particular he carried his pretensions very far, and imagined that very few esteemed him and his works as much as they deserved), but he was likewise desirous of inspiring every bosom with tender affection, and in this expectation it is not wonderful that he was disappointed.

" It is true the highest degree of passion was blended with his conversation. Female charms never excited in him the least desire, without inflaming his bosom with love: and he never entertained a high regard for any man without resigning himself entirely to him. As he did not meet with a return to his attachment; as the beautiful female, who esteemed him as a man of genius, yet preferred another for a lover; as the learned or the great who took delight in his conversation, nevertheless had friends with whom they were more intimate: he imagined that he was betrayed by both. When he at length discovered that

not obliged to comply with the will of another." Seclusion from every pleasure checks the desires, and, through the impossibility of gratifying them, they are stifled in their birth.

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they observed his failings, and mentioned them behind his back, though in his presence they manifested only attachment and esteem; he regarded them (particularly after the persecutions he actually endured had rendered him still more irritable) as his secret enemies.

"This his disposition and its consequences are most evident in his disagreement with Hume. That great man, whose talents and character were, however, totally different from those of Rousseau, entertained a high regard for the latter, as one of the greatest writers of his age, and pitied him as the victim of misfortune. The cause why he invited him to England, and sought to procure him a pension from the king, was undoubtedly pure philanthropy and unaffected regard for a distinguished man, mingled probably with a small portion of vanity at finding that he was capable of serving the object of his esteem. But Hume did not on that account renounce his character, his spirit of observation and his satirical disposition. He had long been acquainted with the foibles of Rousseau. As he conversed daily with him in England, he likewise perceived the ludicrous traits of his character, was offended by his jealousy, and incommoded by his extravagant pretensions. He was naturally more tenderly attached to his English friends than to this French philosopher, whom he had before known only through the medium of his works, and whom misfortune alone had converted into his friend.

"Was it treason, if in the circle of his confidential friends he uttered his candid opinion of a man whom, on many accounts, he respected, and whose situation he was striving to ameliorate? When he described the conduct of Rousseau, was it his fault, that it excited a smile and even sometimes disgust? Rousseau, however, did not see things in this light, when he was informed of it by officious friends, or rather malicious persons, who were enemies both to him and Hume. Rousseau now saw in Hume only a

Solitude is, therefore, attended with undeniable advantages, if it be not abused, and if retirement be blended with social intercourse. Seneca admirably observes: "the former inspires us with the desire of conversing with mankind, and the latter causes us to retire within ourselves, the one operates as an antidote to the other. Solitude removes the disgust we have conceived of society, and social converse relieves us from the lassitude produced by retirement. The mind must not be employed in constant exertions, but requires some recreation. Socrates was not ashamed to play with boys; Cato, when fatigued by his cares for the public welfare, took delight in a convivial glass, and the conqueror of Carthage amused himself with dancing."

We must therefore divide ourselves with firm and manly resolution between the world and Solitude, between sensual pleasures and superior gratifications; and thus the levity of the votary of dissipation will not lead us into vice, nor the moroseness and severity of the anachoret into misanthropy; for true wisdom lies mid-way between the world and retirement.

These observations on Solitude and social life and the rational medium between the two, will

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haughty, tyrant who wanted to chain him to his triumphal car; a traitor who, under the appearance of snatching him from want, wished to render him more miserable and at the same time contemptible. He renounced with disdain the pension already granted by the king, quitted Hume and England with a firm conviction of the malicious disposition of mankind, and plunged still deeper into the blackest melancholy, which, in conjunction with Solitude, at length deprived him of his senses." T.

tend to elucidate much that is contained in this work on Solitude, which has been grossly misunderstood by men of shallow minds. But two grand points still remain, on which I wish to explain my sentiments as precisely and as accurately as possible; these are mysticism and monastic seclusion. Both are worthy of attention; the former on account of the importance of the subject, and the latter on account of the revolution it has already experienced and that with which it is still farther threatened.

I have advanced many objections against mysticism. Much might still be said on the subject and many things might justly be urged in its favor; for whoever accuses me of injustice towards any religious sect or party, towards any man, or any class of men, has mistaken my words and my disposition.

Religion and love are sometimes so intimately connected, that it is necessary to have some acquaintance with mysticism in order to comprehend many phenomena. I once saw, in Switzerland, two great divines embrace each other in the street with all the fervor of celestial affection. I could rather have died than have refrained from laughing to see them, after every salute, hold up their heads towards the sky like fowls when they drink. Those who can embrace with such fervor and such profound sensibility, are far advanced on the high-road of the imagination, towards the region of mysticism.

Almost all coquettes become pious, when their charms are faded. But if we observe with attention the conversion of their hearts from their darling sin to devotion, we shall invariably discover a previous capitulation between human nature and piety; and

this is but too often the commencement of female mysticism. If her spiritual adviser or confessor is young, handsome and vigorous; if he has a fine, glowing and languishing eye; if there is a certain vivacity, boldness, sweetness, pliancy and tenderness in his whole demeanor; the conversion of such a coquette is half accomplished. Childlike resignation and cheerfulness are the natural result of her spiritual conversation with this accomplished man. Many would give their property and possessions, and their husbands and children into the bargain, if they could but live and die in the company of this fascinating saint. "His precepts," say they, "are totally different from those of your stiff and decrepid divines. If we do not always comprehend him, yet he never fails to understand us; for he is perfectly acquainted with human nature and can discover the inmost recesses of the heart. And yet his judgments are always so favorable!" Thus the new convert forgets all her sinful admirers out of love to religion and such a handsome man. And he who has already led a thousand female hearts by the silken cords of love, gradually acquires her unlimited confidence; she opens her whole heart, conceals nothing from him, and makes a gigantic progress in religion, till at length the whole terminates in mysticism and etherial love.

Among the genuine mystics must by no means be included those extravagant fanatics, who now and then make so much noise concerning mysticism, and whose senseless jargon is nothing more than sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. The real mystics are people of a very different descrip-

tion. They are a peaceful race whose imaginations are never intoxicated, nor their minds convulsed, who have perhaps attained, amidst uninterrupted love and tranquillity to the highest degree of human felicity. The unmolested enjoyment of permanent love, and tranquillity in the ordinary life of man, is a state of bliss that cannot but be ardently desired, even if a female only were the object of our love; but were that object the most exalted of beings, I know nothing on earth which is capable of imparting to the imagination and heart of one who possesses the blessing of health such celestial tranquillity.

The aim of genuine mysticism is, by means of contemplation to enlighten the understanding and to fill the heart with the purest love. There are two ways of making a progress in mysticism, the most common of which is the following. The soul, in the perfect conviction of its own nothingness and deep depravity must not think of itself but with disgust and abhorrence;* on the contrary it must, with the most fervent devotion and the most tender love, look up to the Almighty, and, aided by his grace and power, remove out of the way all that separates it from God. What the soul is not able to accomplish by its own exertions the Almighty effects alone, by eradicating all its depravity, and to this operation it must submit with resignation and composure. Extraordinary progress is made

* It is not, however, necessary that, in order to shew their humility and to exercise themselves in that virtue, the votaries of mysticism should imitate the example of the mystic nun, Marie a la coque, who licked up the spittle that fell from the mouths of others.

in this path of exalted virtue by the mystic, who is favored from the first with extacies and visions ; on whose understanding, imagination and senses, the Almighty operates by means of extraordinary light and uncommon sensations. If God go before him, every thing is rendered practicable and easy ; he breaks the gates of brass, he bursts the bars of iron asunder.

All genuine mystical writers agree in the above doctrines, as well as in those which follow. We were all created by God, in order to be one with God, to be perfectly like him, that he may be all in all. This can be effected only by the power of his spirit. Man, by aspiring to attain perfection through his own exertions, plunged himself and all his descendants into misery and corruption. When separated from God, man continued to fall still deeper into darkness, wickedness, and depravity. From this abyss the Almighty alone could rescue his creatures and elevate them again to their original, high destination. This, in his immeasurable goodness, power and mercy, he is inclined to do, and requires of men nothing but a willing heart and their strenuous co-operation in his purposes. It is then that the fear of God is impressed on the heart. The soul is then purified, enlightened, and made fit for that union with the Almighty which, at length, takes place. Whoever believes in Jesus as the son of God, as his Lord and Saviour, is in the true sense a child of God, a joint partaker of the divine nature, and is thus united with God. In this vale of tears, notwithstanding this union and fellowship, we cannot enjoy that perfect happiness which is reserved for eternity. We still walk in

the shade and our will is not yet perfectly conformable to the will of the Most High.

So far all mystical writers agree. They differ according to their opinion, only in things which at length terminate in the same point. "There is," say they, "an infinite variety in the bodies and souls of men; they therefore oppose the operations of the Almighty in very different ways, according to the difference of their dispositions, their stations in life, and the persons with whom they associate and converse. The ways in which God draws men to himself are likewise extremely different. God alone knows what each is capable of enduring, and of performing; he is acquainted with all his wants and all his grievances. He therefore adapts himself to each, now dispensing light or correction, now strewing the path with flowers or with thorns, now filling the soul with illumination or with faith. At other times he effects his purposes by the endearments of love or the most painful chastisement, by pouring out his spirit, or merely by inflaming our will. Amidst this infinite variety of methods in which God operates on the human heart, the manner in which men are affected is equally various. None experiences what the other feels and yet all feel the same thing; all are drawn by the spirit of God and yet each pursues his own way."

This affords a clue to all the labyrinths of mysticism and thus are developed the variety of mystical inspirations, mystical visions and sensations; the sublimity, and at the same time the emptiness of this speculative theology, its loftiest flights and its idle reveries.

Principles of mysticism.

The sentiments of those who have made the greatest advances in mysticism are replete with dignity and beauty. "God," say they, "is present with us all, though he may appear to be absent. We feel his presence only by means of the fellowship and communion established between us and this most perfect of beings. Repeated cleansing restored us to the first and original purity which man possessed at the moment when he issued from the hands of his creator. We see God as far as his nature permits him to be visible. The veil with which we were enveloped is removed. The clouds which hovered around and intercepted the view of the Deity are dispersed. The gloom is dissipated and nothing prevents the eternal light from illuminating and replenishing our souls. The noblest employment of man is to endeavour to estrange his soul from all sensual objects. In seclusion from every thing else, he should withdraw into himself alone. He should be so wrapt in meditation, as entirely to forget himself and all that he knew. This profound contemplation and speculative life is not the natural state of man, but it is the only one which answers all our wishes. It imparts that delightful repose in which all the discords that surrounded us cease, and our ears are filled with that divine harmony, by which every thing around us is pervaded. We have now arrived at the source of life, the origin of existence, the region of truth. This is the centre of felicity, the ocean whence souls are constantly ascending to God, and into which they are continually descending from him. There is found all the happiness of which man is susceptible. There all passions cease;

there is the end of all uncertainty and of all tribulation. There dwell only love, concord, liberty and love. This should be the object of all our exertions, we should subdue every obstacle and drive far away all the illusory phantoms which lead us astray. Thither we speed our course, animated by the strength of God and the hope of that blissful moment, which shall bring back to the eternal his own emanation and shall unite us with our divine original."

Could not you, my beloved reader, wish likewise to indulge in such reveries? Confess in private, if you dare not publicly acknowledge, that he has attained the summit of felicity who can thus think, imagine and believe. Does not mysticism appear to be the surest way to the highest human happiness, and to be more conducive than any thing in the world, to the total renunciation of ourselves and of every earthly object?

In the enjoyment of this divine peace and illumination lived three persons, to whom even in my tender infancy I was affectionately attached; Fenelon, Muralt and my father. Fenelon, the archbishop of Cambray, the immortal author of Telemachus, the most amiable man of his age, lived for many years entirely in the region of mysticism. I felt as if the effulgence of his sanctity surrounded me, when I surveyed at Cambray the archi-episcopal palace which he inhabited. Ah! how my heart throbbed with exquisite delight, when in 1751 I entered Fenelon's cathedral at Cambray and there approached, with awe and veneration and eyes bedimmed with tears, the high altar, where he so often elevated his sacred hands and his tender and

virtuous heart to the Almighty!—M. von Muralt, a nobleman of my native canton, Bern, the author of the once highly celebrated Letters *sur les Anglois, sur les Francois, et sur les Voyages*; the only native of Switzerland to whom the Germans, before they were acquainted with the great Haller, attributed his Swiss poems, originally published without the name of the author; he, who, at the time when his countrymen were regarded as brutes by the French, exposed to that nation the emptiness of their own pretensions, and proved to them that their vaunted Boileau was a very indifferent poet; this M. von Muralt, the most acute philosopher, and the best writer which Switzerland then had to boast, was, during the whole latter half of his life, which he passed at his mansion of Colombier, on the charming banks of the lake of Neufchatel, in this celestial state. My beloved father, who was snatched from me in my thirteenth year, during his whole life a valetudinarian, but a very intelligent and enlightened man, to whom I am indebted for my independent mode of thinking and an excellent education, whom I cherished with tenderness and respect, was for many years in the same blissful state, though he endeavoured to conceal it from my observation.

What Fenelon, Muralt and my beloved parent were capable of experiencing I must acknowledge that I am not. What renders one person a mystic is very seldom found in another. No man in the possession of his senses would think of adopting the precepts of mysticism for the general rules of life; but yet every one is at liberty to be a mystic, in

in the same manner as he is at liberty to remain single if he pleases.

Mysticism, therefore, considered in one point of view appears truly sublime; and notwithstanding all its vapors and obscurity it has frequently been of real advantage to the world and mankind. The religion of the heart and the theology of peace, was, during a great number of centuries to be found only among the mystics and in their writings. The precepts and the actions of the rest of the christians were the offspring of madness and ferocity. In the times of the most deplorable ignorance, in the darkest night of superstition, when persecution and vice every where prevailed, mysticism was a refreshment and a consolation to hearts which took no delight in the subtleties of scholastic theology, in empty ceremonies and in a barren religion.

Since the great reformation in the sixteenth century, amidst all the fury with which it inspired the persecuting party, and all the hatred which was naturally excited in the bosoms of the persecuted; mysticism was the only bond of love between the christians of different sects. The philanthropist observes with pleasure, what a powerful impression was frequently produced on the hearts both of the Lutherans and Calvinists by many excellent passages in the writings of mystical priests and monks. The works of innumerable catholic authors were not only read and admired by great numbers of Protestants, but they derived from them real advantage; and on the other hand the writings of Protestant mystics were as favorably received by the Catholics. Works which Luther and Arndt

had commended and published, were prepared by French monks for the press. Of all the theological performances of the seventeenth century, the writings of the mystics were in the most general request. No books have been translated into so many languages and none have been more frequently reprinted. The productions of a Guyon, a Bourignon, a Schukmann were almost regarded as classical. The rest of christendom was at that time involved in barren controversies and unprofitable disputes. A universal theological war was waged between each principal party, and all the religious sects belonging to those parties were at variance with each other. The genuine mystics, as well Catholics as Protestants, avoided all pedantry, discord and religious controversy. Mysticism alone was the bond of union between Catholics and Protestants; it was the universal language of the heart, which the pious of both denominations alike understood and loved; it was mysticism that reconciled their jarring discordancies.

As the pride of many learned and dogmatic physicians is sometimes humbled by the successes of empirics, so the pride of all the divines was humbled by the writings of mystical females. These women, many of whom had little or no education, attracted the notice of the world by the extraordinary powers of their understanding, and particularly by an imagination, which exalted and animated every subject; while the works of the most learned divines and professors were totally disregarded. Every one was astonished at the style of these unlettered females, at the independence, candor, simplicity, tenderness, and ease of their language;

at their child-like spirit; at the purity of their expressions and sensations; at the animation diffused through every part; at their practical virtue, which never incurred the suspicion of mere sentimental extravagancy; at their heroic and total renunciation of earthly pleasures and almost of coquetry itself; at their sincere repentance, and entire resignation to the will of God and all the dispensations of his providence, and at their complete rejection of all the perplexities of scholastic divinity, which represses the understanding and freezes the heart. These females diffused not only more piety, but likewise more genuine and essential religion than all the Scribes and Pharisees, the literary and pedantic wranglers of those times, from their chairs and their pulpits.

Genuine mysticism was always preferable to the ordinary practice of the christian religion. It was ever superior to that cold, pedantic theology which produces no effect on the heart, and whose scholastic language neither enlightens nor amends. The religion of Christ, as it is now taught, is however infinitely more rational and consolatory, more instructive and luminous, than any species of mysticism. But, for those who cannot become or remain virtuous without fanatical ideas and enthusiastic feelings, mysticism of any kind is better than the cold and spiritless doctrines of the divinity of the schools.

This apology for mysticism was certainly not expected from me. It, however, contradicts nono of the observations which I have made in the preceding chapters of this work. Mysticism is, in the eye of philosophy, neither to be despised nor repro-

bated, excepting inasmuch as it is enveloped in clouds and obscurity, inasmuch as it pretends that reason renders a man unfit for spiritual sensations and enjoyments, and converts the religion of Christ into flights of imagination and fanatical illusion.

After these, as I flatter myself, totally impartial reflections on mysticism, I wish with equal impartiality to make a few more observations concerning the monastic life. What monks are has been manifested by the experience of fifteen hundred years. It will perhaps not be amiss, to introduce into a work on Solitude some reflections on monks and monastic seclusion, adapted to the present age. Though my words may want the unction of an ascetic writer, though I cannot hope that my work will obtain a place in the libraries of convents, yet I hope no catholic ecclesiastic will be inclined to refuse the author the character of an unprejudiced, independent and honest man.

Monks are certainly as capable as other men, of the most exalted virtue. It is possible that, though, in their Solitude, they may enjoy more exquisite spiritual delight, they are not more acceptable in the sight of God than the man of business. It may be, that the man of business acts more nobly in resigning all the pleasures of retirement, in order to fulfil the duties of his station, and by social industry to contribute his portion to the general happiness. But why should not virtue flourish in convents as well as in the hovel of indigence? Why should not the Almighty regard with an eye of compassion those great men, who strive to attain the highest perfection of which human nature is susceptible; who, exercised in the field of arduous

enterprize, confident of victory over themselves, run their heroic career of piety alone, under his all-seeing eye, regardless of the opinions of the world-ly-minded; who, often perhaps by the power of their merits, make an atonement for a people, from whose sins they flee and for whose conversion they continually supplicate?

All the anachorets were not fanatics. Many of them certainly possessed high moral perfection and internal dignity. It is only the anachoret of this description who can entertain a disinterested love for mankind, who can think, write and pray for them, who can shew them by his example, that nothing but too great complacency towards themselves, prevents them from subduing their passions so completely as a virtuous man can and ought to do. Who knows whether an eccentric anachoret may not sometimes have promoted the designs of Providence? It must at least be admitted, that anachorets and monks have often denied themselves the enjoyment of the present gifts of Providence, for fear of losing a portion of the felicity of a future life; and that many of them were rendered unprofitable citizens of the world, by the hope of being, on that account, more fit to inhabit heaven. In this enthusiasm, in this overstraining of the human powers there was however something great; something too refined for the observation of inferior minds. Human nature is, indeed, incompatible with a life of celestial purity; however high the degree to which men may elevate the powers of the soul and divert their passions, and however specious may be the perfection of which they afford an example. But without assuming the extrava-

gant fancies of the ancient anachorets and monks as the rules of our life and conduct, we admire their courage, we respect their virtue, and are gratified by such experiments, which, at least prove to what height man is capable of soaring.

Many circumstances relative to the lives of the ancient anachorets and monks have doubtless been inaccurately related. Their biographers in general were themselves monks and fanatics; piety and ignorance were the characteristics of most of the legendary writers. Instead of making saints of their heroes, as they intended, they have represented them as madmen.* The words and actions of the ancient monks and anachorets sometimes, however, display good sense, acuteness, dignity, compassion and benevolence; while at others they are equally replete with absurdity, folly, extravagance and madness. This observation, which was originally made by the English ecclesiastical historian, Jortin, affords room to surmise, that probably the biographers of these saints sometimes painted them in colors very different from the truth; that they ascribed to them more severe penances than they actually performed; extravagancies and follies of which they were never guilty, and spiritual adventures in which they were never engaged.

Many saints of the Romish church were indisputably men of the most elevated character. It is

* Lactantius, in the fourth book of his institutions, says: "Wisdom should in preference be sought there, where the appearance of folly is most conspicuous; for under that veil God has concealed the treasures of wisdom and truth, that the secret of his divine work might not be discovered."

therefore highly rational and advantageous that their memory should be revered, that their images should be perpetuated, that the kindred arts of painting and sculpture should, with elegance and taste, transmit the record of their lives and actions to distant ages, and that these representations should be contemplated with unaffected rapture and with holy awe. Cardinal Borromæo was a saint possessing an exalted soul and almost supernatural energy in the practice of virtue. He exercised himself in the most rigid monastic austerities, but without renouncing the mildest virtues which adorn humanity. Though he submitted his body to the scourge, he yet retained the most active philanthropy. He was chaste, which all monks are not, and yet gave portions to young females. He was himself afraid of the tender passion, and yet with pleasure promoted the gratification of it in others. Upon the whole, Cardinal Borromæo was such an elevated character, that we cannot contemplate him without astonishment and shame.

Nicolas de la Flue, or, as he is commonly called, Brother Claus, was a distinguished saint, and is entitled to greater respect than any anachoret that ever existed. He was a native of Switzerland, and resided in the canton of Unterwalden; he had filled the highest stations both civil and military, before he abandoned his wife and his five sons and five daughters, retiring into a dreary desert in that canton, where, amidst continual prayer and severe fasting, he devoted himself for twenty years to the solitary service of heaven, without ceasing to love his country. The services which Brother Claus rendered to all Switzerland have made his memory

immortal in the annals of that country, and his name is enrolled among those of the Swiss patriots of the first rank. After the defeat of the Burgundians, great disharmony took place among the Swiss, partly on account of the rich plunder,* and

* The bones of the Burgundians, slain on this occasion, are still to be seen inclosed within an iron railing, situated by the side of the road near the village of Murten in the canton of Bern. Among other inscriptions placed around this open grave, there is one by the celebrated Haller, to this effect: "Stop Helvetian! Here lies the adventurous host, before which Liege fell, and the throne of France itself trembled. It was not the numbers of our ancestors, it was not the superiority of their weapons, but unanimity, invigorating their arms, that destroyed the foe."

The following account of the invasion of Switzerland by the ambitious Charles, and the total discomfiture of his army, is given in the lively language of M. Karamsin. "The duke of Burgundy, Charles the Bold, was one of the most powerful princes of his age; he possessed heroic courage, but was the scourge of mankind and the terror of the neighboring nations. He resolved, in the year 1476, to make war upon Helvetia, and to subject the pride of its independent inhabitants to the iron sceptre of tyranny. His troops advanced, his many-colored standards waved aloft, and the earth groaned under the weight of his artillery. The Burgundian troops, covering a larger space than the eye could embrace, were already ranged on the banks of Murten's lake; and Charles, with envious look, beholding Helvetia's tranquil valleys, already called them in imagination his own; when at once, by means of signals, the report was spread throughout all Switzerland, that the enemy was at hand. The peaceful shepherds instantly left their cottages and their flocks, armed themselves with battle-axes and lances, assembled at the sound of the trumpet and the call of patriotism, which was reverberated by every heart, and like impetuous Alpine torrents, rushed from their native mountains upon their numerous foes. Charles's thunders roared; but the

partly on account of the dissatisfaction of the rural cantons, concerning the alliances formed by the others without their participation. The spirit of discord pervaded the confederacy, and its covenant, ratified with so much blood, was in danger of being destroyed in their assembly at Stanz. Brother Claus was informed in his hermitage of the misfortune which impended over his country. He did not content himself with expecting miracles in his cell by the efficacy of faith and prayer, but hastened to Stanz, and like a messenger of peace, entered with modesty and yet with dignity, the furious assembly of the deputies of the league. He addressed them with impressive eloquence, convinced them of the dangers and disasters which threatened their country from their feuds, and told them what measures they ought immediately to adopt if they wished well to their native land. The storm was instantly appeased; the plunder was divided according to the advice of Brother Claus; and the cantons renounced the separate alliances which they had formed; Freyburg and Solothurn

valiant, the invincible Swiss, enveloped in smoke and darkness, broke the ranks of his warriors. His thunder ceased, and the menacing phalanx fell beneath their irresistible arms. The duke himself plunged in despair into the lake, and his horse, being strong, carried him in safety to the opposite shore. Only one faithful servant escaped with the duke. But Charles, in a fit of phrenzy, shot him with his own hand, when he turned his eyes to the field of battle and beheld the complete discomfiture of his army; at the same time exclaiming: " Shall you alone be left?"---The victors afterwards collected the bones of the slain and deposited them by the road-side where they still remain." T.

were admitted into the confederacy, and the deputies of the league embraced Brother Claus and each other with fraternal affection. On this account the hermit's name is justly esteemed sacred. His bones are still revered to this day in the church of Saxeln in Unterwalden. Though his skeleton is decorated, in a manner equally ludicrous and uncouth, with all sorts of childish ornaments, and is exposed before the high altar to the veneration of the public; yet the memory of this saint will be embalmed in the hearts of every true native of Switzerland; because, through the lustre of his virtues and the wisdom of his counsels, he restored harmony to his country, and again consolidated that covenant, which will, I trust, remain firm and indissoluble, till the Alps are hurled from their foundations, and till all the kingdoms, heroes and nations of the earth are engulphed in one common abyss.*

All the saints of the Romish church were not such holy characters as Borromæo and Brother Claus; nor were all the anachorets and monks actuated by such a spirit of philanthropy. Monastic Solitude was, in fact, rendered pernicious only by the abuse. That the convents should be the retreats of such depravity as they have frequently been, was not more necessary than that fire should be an engine of destruction in the hands of the in-

* Every reader who possesses any feeling will be inclined to rejoice that the amiable author, whose love to his country is so conspicuously manifested on various occasions, was not doomed to behold its liberties subverted, its government overturned, and its peaceful mountains subjected to the iron rod of a military despotism. T.

cendiary. If we make no allowances for the abuse of objects, there is nothing that may not be censured. It cannot be denied that the convents may have been of utility in a variety of ways, and that those monks and nuns, who devote their lives to the attendance on the sick, are very serviceable members of human society. Convents would certainly be a desirable retreat for those who after devoting the greatest part of their powers to the service of the state, are desirous of enjoying repose ; for men whose faculties are declining ; for such who, by bodily infirmity, poverty, or the want of interest, are deprived for life of every cheering prospect ; in a word, for the unfortunate of every description. My beloved and regretted friend, Iselin, has introduced into his Ephemerides some admirable proposals for the secularisation of convents and of monastic orders.

It were to be wished that in every country there existed convents for the reception of those who are weary of the world, and for such as would not be missed in society ; for persons of both sexes who are either desirous of affording great examples, or have not acted the most brilliant part on the theatre of the world.* Such retreats would be of infi-

* Burnett, in the History of his own Times, says, that a distinguishd prelate of the English church, archbishop Leighton, thought that " the great and leading error of the Reformation was, that more religious houses and of the monastic course of life, free from the entanglements of vows and other mixtures, were not preserved : so that the protestant churches had neither places for education, nor retreat for men of mortified tempers." We are informed by the same writer, that, on the suppression of the convents by

nite service to the penitent, to those who have grown grey in laborious occupations, to the weak mind overwhelmed with the pressure of misfortune, and rendered incapable either of performing the duties or enjoying the pleasures of social life. Though in some parts of Bavaria, Carthusian prelates may be seen driving to town in a splendid equipage, drawn by four spirited horses; yet there appears to me something truly sublime in the order of Carthusians, in as far as its members enter it merely out of love to Solitude, to flee from the tumult of the world, and to devote themselves with fervent piety to the duties of religion.*

Henry VIII. bishop Latimer earnestly solicited that two or three of those institutions might be suffered to remain in each county, for the purpose of preaching, study and prayer. "But," says he, in the History of the Reformation, "an universal suppression was resolved upon; and therefore neither could the intercessions of the gentry of Oxfordshire, nor of the visitors, preserve the nunnery at Godstow, though they found in it great strictness of life, and it was the common place for the education of young women of quality in that county." T.

* No writer of modern times has spoken of the Carthusians, or treated of convents and a monastic life in general, with such spirit, such tenderness and humanity, as Madam von Berlepsch, a noble, young and beautiful Hanoverian lady, in her letters on those subjects. The following passage abounds with so much good sense, is so moving and so exactly adapted to my purpose, that I cannot forbear transcribing it.

"You know" writes the fair author, "that I always entertained a secret inclination and respect for a monastic life. This I durst not profess, because I should have been charged with thinking so only out of a desire to appear singular. I am however conscious of having better motives. The exalted and pure spirit of piety, humility and content, to which

Sentiments of a Hanoverian lady on convents.

A life of monastic seclusion may have its pleasures, if those, who preside over the convent, pos-

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the convents certainly owe their origin, the courage with which their founders renounced all the allurements of the world and social pleasures, with the pious design of preparing their souls, in profound retirement, for a better life, excite my warmest admiration.

"I am deeply moved when I reflect on the tears and sighs, which, unobserved by the world, have so often ascended from these silent habitations to the Almighty. How many darling passions and powerful propensities have there been subdued! I never yet entered a convent, without feeling a kind of holy awe, which produced perhaps more agreeable sensations than the most superb view of art or the most magnificent spectacle. There I forgot all the satires levelled, and, among the rest, even by myself, against convents. I felt only how exquisitely delightful, how heavenly that life must be, which, faithful to the spirit of the institution, is spent, in a convent, in the exercise and enjoyment of unaffected love, benevolence, tranquillity and piety, in the daily improvement of the mind and heart, amidst cleanliness, order, simplicity and uninterrupted repose.

"This you will tell me is chimerical. Perhaps so. But why must it be a chimera? For this very reason, because too great a number of persons is collected in those institutions; and of persons who have no pure ideas of religion, whose early youth, passed in the world, has already robbed them of the bloom of innocence and excited in their bosoms many turbulent passions.

"That it is our duty to devote ourselves to such austere seclusion, I cannot believe. Under many circumstances it is probably the very reverse. I am likewise ready to admit, that, according to their present constitution, these abodes of indolence are far too numerous, and that a plan for suppressing them all, would be a very wise and politic measure. But many of the sons and daughters of affliction would then be deprived of an asylum; for you must allow that, for the sick, and the infirm, for persons oppressed by misfortune, disappointed in their wishes and deceived in

sess any good sense and liberality of sentiment. It may then be a house of God where the recluse seeks and finds a refuge from himself. He is not overwhelmed with lassitude and despondency by his situation, when he is at liberty to employ all the resources against languor. A monk may pass his time in study, if he be permitted by the superiors of his convent; but in most of them this liberty is denied.

In my youth, the sight of a lovely young female beneath the veil and in the monastic habit, excited my abhorrence of the bolts, the gates, the abbess, and every thing by which she was surrounded. I could not refrain from reflecting on the rash, inconsiderate and extorted vow, which immured her in such a dungeon. I imagined that I could read in her eyes the mighty difference between her feelings and her mode of life, between her thoughts and her words. The mind is naturally filled with pity, sympathy and love, at the sight of a beautiful and susceptible nun, who, condemned to everlasting solitude and self-denial, is obliged to renounce all the enjoyments permitted by nature, and would incur death and perdition by following her dictates. Nothing but mysticism can save her, and nothing can render her situation more tolerable: there is nothing more cheering and consolatory to the heart

their hopes, the convent affords a tranquil and secure port, where they may collect the shattered wreck of their happiness and their energies, and enjoy the remnant that is left; whereas, in the world, that likewise would be irrecoverably lost. It is on this account that all convents, and especially those of the Carthusians, are so interesting to me."

of a nun, for mysticism is entirely grounded on the tender passion. Though a nun may, at last, forget for what purpose she was created by the Almighty, she yet knows that while she remains in this wretched body she can love nothing but God. This continual enthusiasm of love, if it does not degenerate into frenzy, together with the manual occupations of the nuns, is in my opinion the cause, why, (according to the observation of Hunauld, a celebrated French physician), nuns in general live longer than other females.

Friends of liberty have always exclaimed against the confinements and restraints of monastic institutions, and yet they are defended by an ardent lover of liberty, a protestant philosopher, my worthy friend de Luc. "When the interest of many," says he, "is united in one point, all must submit to one general rule, and on this account the monastic institutions have always surpassed every other society of men. Most of the rural convents which manifest much greater opulence than any of their neighbors, cultivated the land, and from the industrious prosecution of this object they derive their wealth. And why should they not enjoy it?" exclaims the philanthropic de Luc. "We should imitate the monks and not envy them."

But this amiable philanthropist likewise believes, "that it would be better if no locks and bolts prevented those from quitting a convent who find nothing but disgust within its walls; and yet it is necessary that there should be something to oppose momentary aversion. In those places where general regulations are adopted, all owe them obedience. Religion alone, either through its natural power or

the importance which is given to it, produces this salutary effect. A convent which should be desirous of violating its rules would have the whole order against it; because the latter aims at obtaining universal respect. Monks are men who have chosen, or who, like many others, have been obliged to choose a certain condition; and," says the amiable de Luc, "we ought to wish that every man may be happy in his condition, if he does not destroy the happiness of others."

The self-denial of a christian consists not in continual austerity of life, nor in the renunciation of all the innocent pleasures of the world. Religion only acts as a restraint on illicit enjoyments, in the same manner as the dread of the inevitable consequences represses the inclinations of animals. A cat belonging to a respectable family, which I frequently visited in Switzerland, was accustomed to walk on the table among the dishes, while the family were at dinner. The most savory dish produced only a slight movement of her snout; she then approached with longing and yet with timidity towards the delicious odor; but neither her mouth nor her paw yielded to the temptation. This cat withstood her desires with less trouble than St. Anthony, merely for fear of the consequences which would inevitably have ensued.

I have often been inclined to become a monk, when I have seen how suffering merit is every where oppressed by the insolence of office; when I have reflected on all the adversities of life, and the obscurity of the ways of Providence; or when I have resolved to suffer myself to be no longer enveloped by the clouds of prejudice which dar-

ken society. But, amidst the contemplation on the delightful scenes which I expected to enjoy in my tranquil cell and my little garden, I could not forbear thinking of the rules and restraints of a convent, and of the monsters to whose authority I should be subject, and was immediately cured of my folly.

Tranquillity of mind may, however, be enjoyed in a convent. He has no acquaintance with mankind and no experience of the world, who imagines, that happiness can be found in any thing but in the alteration of his propensities and passions. They pursue him like furies whithersoever he goes. The death-like silence of the convent invariably conveys peace and tranquillity to every virtuous character, who, secluded from the disgusting tumult of the world, and acquainted with the management of the passions, nevertheless does not hate society, but remembers it only with indifference; and, remote from pleasures and enjoyments more brilliant than solid, leads a life of useful employment and resignation, without pretensions and without disappointments.

I therefore wish, out of love to Solitude and veneration for the real saints of the Roman Catholic church, an eternal duration to some convents in every catholic country. Elevation of sentiment in any man excites admiration. It is a grand spectacle to behold how a wise man encounters misfortune, or to see how a monk, in the seclusion of his convent, daily awakes to increased strength and to new victories over himself, by the mortification of his darling passions and the continued exertions of

his mind; and how he seeks repose for his wounded heart before the cross of his Redeemer.

At the doleful sound of the melancholy, slowly-tolling bell, he folds his holy hands and prays to the Almighty for a happy day, for truth and for the gift of rational reflection. He throws himself at matins upon his knees, with a mind which offers up every thing to God, even though the heart be not always willing. He never enters his cell, but with the firm resolution of living in such a manner as to be every day prepared to die. But even here, where death and truth wave their awful torches, even in this cell, inaccessible to the world, which its tenant quits only for eternity, he is perhaps unwilling to die; his heart, true as the needle to the pole, turns toward some favorite object--turns, but trembles too. He follows not its impulse. Wisdom, tried wisdom keeps him steady, even while he in vain extends his arms in despair towards the boundary of fate, when he throws around his eyes glaring with wildness and horror, and, through the gloomy clouds which intercept the view, casts his anxious looks towards a yet distant country. A ray of hope once remained, it was extinguished in disappointment; he struggled not against despair, and despair came. Now he knows that if he desponds he is lost for ever, and that the state in which God has placed him will remain unchanged till death. This inspires him with stoic fortitude, elevates his mind and heals his heart. His sighs may still ascend; but yet it is possible to enjoy happiness in his wretched cell; for the virtue, by which he has subdued himself, is happiness. All the energies of the soul are augmented, when the feelings are over-

powered and captivated by the fire and dignity of the sentiments. His ear no longer listens to the tumult of the world; he is no longer desirous of hearing other voices than those of monks. Nothing fills him with unavailing regret in his heroic career, and he longs for no honor but that which awaits him in heaven. He now calls nothing pleasure but what extends a beneficial influence over eternity. He now discovers a light in the midst of the darkness. He now sees at a distance the night approaching, in which the weary soul must quit its habitation of clay. How easy is this task now that he has long effaced with his tears the memory of what he loved more than life, as he has conquered every hardship and surmounted every obstacle. He awaits death firm as the towering oak, whether cheered by the genial solar ray or battered by the tempest. In his last moments his heart still throbs at each exercise of devotion. Extended on his hard pallet, he once more lifts up his cold, dying hands amidst the general chorus of his brethren; with a trembling tongue and a fallen countenance he once more blesses the object of his love, and expires.

Monks should always afford great examples, as they are determined to attempt what it is difficult for human nature to accomplish. It would certainly be better if the monks were to adopt a mild system of morality which they are capable of practising, than to retain the severe regulations to which they cannot possibly adhere. On account of the severity of his rules the monk is not virtuous, however irreproachable he may appear. He fled the world from compulsion, and its lusts still rage within him. He who daily submits his back to the scourge,

and, in the dreary obscurity of his cell, execrates the world, has probably as little compassion as the pious fanatic, who addresses you with courteous words and friendly looks, and at the same time carries a dagger in his bosom. Castigations are a crime against humanity, and a pitiful homage to heaven.

The monks were less attentive to the amendment of the inner man in themselves and others, than to enriching their convents. All they teach mankind tends only to the purpose of deranging their understandings in order to draw the money out of their pockets; while the amendment of the heart is totally disregarded. A writer of Vienna has therefore observed with great justice, that "all the silver figures of hands, feet and teeth which are hung round the images of our Savior and the Virgin Mary, are probably not so pleasing to God as the prayer of him who, with inward gratitude for his cure, and his deliverance from suffering and pain, instead of presenting offerings to the saints, practises the christian virtues, performs works of benevolence, and instead of driving the poor from his door, bestows on them food, clothing and consolation."

The catholic saint who stole leather with which he made shoes gratuitously for the poor, was a consummate hypocrite. Such was likewise the character of those members of monastic fraternities, who, from cupidity and the desire of riches, pretended to renounce the world and to mortify their lusts. They lost sight of the principal duties of monastic society, sunk into ignorance and indolence, and were no longer able even to read their breviary.

The depravity of the monks was the inevitable consequence of the universal veneration for monastic institutions. After the barbarians had destroyed all the monasteries in Spain and Gaul, and dispersed the monks, St. Benedict collected his little flock at Monte Cassino, and there founded the still flourishing abbey which is the parent of the Benedictine order. He established new regulations, and for nearly two centuries his monks were objects of general and merited esteem throughout the whole western world. The Benedictines have contributed more than any other cause to the civilization of Germany; they settled in the midst of the thickest forests, applied themselves to the cultivation of the soil, cleared the land, drained morasses and formed lakes which they stocked with fish. For these services the rich rewarded them with considerable presents, and the poor readily assisted them in their labors for the public good. They divided the land among various kinds of tenants, they acquired vassals, who were either presented to them, or who voluntarily sought a refuge among them from the tyranny of the nobles. Charlemagne granted them very important privileges, and small towns and villages were founded. They humanized the Germans, taught them the art of cultivating the earth, and by their hospitality promoted a convivial and social disposition. These successes, however, paved the way for the fall of the Benedictines. Many, out of admiration of their pious and useful exertions, bequeathed a portion of their property to the convents, which produced in the monks neglect of their duties, cupidity, avarice, indolence, ignorance, incontinence,

and at length led to a life distinguished only for licentiousness and debauchery.*

Basil failed in his design when he brought the monks nearer to the bustle of cities and the society of mankind, or rather when he combined the monastic duties with those of social life. This great man possessed very clear ideas of the relative value of a life of retirement and that passed in the intercourse with the world. He perceived that they were at variance, and he was aware that the benefits of the one counterbalanced the pernicious influence of the other. The recluse appeared to him to enjoy greater tranquillity, to be more intimately united with God; but in retirement his virtue was not exposed to temptation. Social life he considered as more useful and beneficial, but less free from tumult and vexation. He therefore reconciled and blended the two modes of life, by erecting habitations not far from the busy scenes of social converse, for spiritual exercises and the votaries of retirement. He placed between them no impassable barriers; he separated them without destroying their connection; for he thought that the monastic life should not be entirely cut off from social intercourse, nor the social life from opportunities for contemplation. The intention of this celebrated father of the church was good, but by connecting the monks more intimately with so-

* To the honor of the Benedictines, I should not omit to mention, that this order has sent forth into the world, twenty-four popes, two hundred cardinals, seven thousand archbishops, fifteen thousand bishops, four thousand saints, and about three thousand martyrs.

ciety, he gave them more power over mankind, and the consequences were terrible.

It was not on Basil's principles, but with the same pernicious consequences, that St. Dominic and St. Francis of Assisi became the founders of two celebrated orders of mendicant monks, which were afterwards divided into innumerable parties, whose members were all distinguished for their love of society. Dominic and Francis, may be considered as the founders of all the mendicant orders, who overturned religion and obscured sound reason by the clouds of ignorance and superstition.

The Franciscans and Capuchins exalted their half-witted father, Francis, to a perfect equality with the Savior of the world. A Capuchin once declared from the pulpit, "that God the Father sometimes mistook the persons of his two sons, Christ and Francis, because they so nearly resembled each other, and were equal in rank; that the holy twelve apostles were only the servants of St. Francis; that without indulgences none could obtain eternal life; and, that as St. Francis was the right hand of God, the Almighty would shut the gates of heaven against all those who should attempt to enter without being provided with his passport."

Such were the notions which the monks every where propagated in society. Their first step invariably was to confuse the understandings of all those who submitted to their spiritual direction. They covered the earth like locusts, devouring the productions destined for the subsistence of the industrious husbandman and citizen, whom they every where deceived with false stories and pretended

miracles, robbing the ignorant at the same time of their reason and their property.

Thus was gross darkness and superstition every where diffused in Catholic countries, and thus the Capuchins and Franciscans contrived to enrich themselves. With their certificates every one was at liberty to commit whatever crimes he pleased. By providing himself with the relic of some saint, such as piece of the bedstead of the blessed mother of God, * or the three sacred nails, any person might enjoy security against all the temptations of the devil; he might defy every misfortune and procure remission of all his sins for a period of twenty years.

Thus immorality was every where established on a broad and solid foundation. The laws and the best intentions of the sovereign were always frustrated through the influence and intrigues of the monks and the superior clergy. As early as the ninth century, the ignorance of the monks was regarded by Charlemagne as the principal source of superstition, and he sought to remedy the evil. The popes, on the contrary, sensible of the advantages which accrued to themselves from the ignorance of the people, were ever the inveterate and hereditary foes to civilization; and with the wishes of the popes the best disposed sovereigns at length always co-

* The author of a celebrated tour through the circle of Bavaria assures us, that in the year 1784, the bones of nearly half a million of saints were to be seen at the convent of Andechs, where, among other things, was preserved a relic of inestimable value, a few drops of milk from the breast of the blessed Virgin.

incided. In the formidable army of the clergy none performed such services for the popes as the mendicant monks. None so well knew how to excite and to appease commotions among the people; none were so entirely devoted to the will of the popes and none possessed such ferocity to execute their sanguinary decrees. The popes therefore dispatched colonies of these and every other description of monks into all the regions of the globe. They took out of the convents the lowest and most frantic idiots and placed them in the episcopal chair; assured, that in every contingency they could excite a host of monks against the bishops. Thus the Romish pontiffs acquired unlimited dominion over the sentiments of the people; thus they maintained the empire of darkness in the human soul, and cut off the catholic nations from all the means of recovering a rational mode of thinking.

Though we are indebted to the monks for the preservation of many of the ancient writers, yet it is not the less certain, that they were ever the most inveterate enemies and the most zealous opponents of every kind of knowledge. It was from the ignorance of the princes, the nobility and the people that they derived their greatest advantages; and on this account they set their faces against the most laudable measures for the improvement of science, and prevented, as much as possible, the diffusion of instruction among the illiterate laity. They themselves were the only instructors; their first point was, therefore, to instil superstition and error into the minds of youth, whom they educated in such a manner, as to ensure their future support; and hav-

ing involved them completely in their toils, consigned them to everlasting ignorance.

The qualifications of the friars for the care of souls and the education of the people were soon discovered, when the bishops, thinking it beneath their dignity publicly to address their flocks, relinquished that duty to the mendicant monks. Superstition and folly was all that the latter were able to inculcate. By the inhuman spirit which from the pulpit they excited in the people towards other religious sects, they greatly aggravated the pernicious force of malignant prejudices, and produced the most implacable animosity in every dispute into which religion could possibly be pressed. Who, but they and persons of the same description, could instil into the mind of the simple countryman, the notion that the field of a Protestant cannot possibly produce a good crop and that a heretic can never prosper?*

The suppression of the mendicant orders would, therefore, in every catholic country be the first step towards diffusing instruction among the lower classes of the people. A certain proportion of ig-

* Dr. Moore having left the canton of Bern and entered the territories of France perceived a shop in which wooden shoes were sold. He went in and entered into conversation with a French peasant who had just purchased a pair of shoes for his wife. *Les Bernois,* said the Frenchman, *sont bien a leur aise, monsieur; pendant que nous autres Francois vivons tres durement, et cependant les Bernois sont des heretiques.* An old woman was sitting in a corner, reading in her prayer-book. *Voila,* she rejoined (at the same time taking off her spectacles and laying her beads on the book) *voila ce que je trouve incomprehensible.*

norance appears to prevail more or less in every part of the world; and if, which I shall not deny, the most stupid nations are in general the most happy, yet I think I have sufficiently proved that the stupidity diffused by monks is not calculated to promote the felicity of any.

Most of the orders and most of the convents appear incapable of any reform. Without an entirely new system of education, by which the former spirit should be expelled from every convent, the monastic life must be to him who feels no internal conviction that he is destined for it, the most odious slavery.

As therefore the monks are utter strangers to the essence of religion, as in its stead they amuse the people with the grossest absurdities and consider only their private interest; as these seducers keep and confirm the vulgar in their superstition merely to obtain money, the abolition of the monastic system is a measure ardently to be desired. No enlightened philanthropist, who is acquainted with the subject, can entertain a doubt, whether it is more praise-worthy to vindicate the monks, or to rejoice at the storms of fate which they experience and to wish that illumination may be universally diffused.

I shall here close my observations on the monastic system and its influence on mankind and states; and likewise my examination of the advantages and prejudicial effects of Solitude. Every one may now chuse whether he will follow the allurements of the world or the call of virtue. I have stated with truth and candor what the world affords; I

have endeavoured to shew the great and important benefits conferred by Solitude.

It is my ardent wish that every one should be convinced of those advantages, that each should be equally enamored of Solitude with myself, and that it may be attainable by all who have a relish for its enjoyments. O, that each who desires it, may, before he dies, enjoy repose beneath the lowly thatch, and that his heart may find a bosom that throbs in tender unison and that will cherish his memory beyond the grave!

It is difficult for persons residing in towns which are not very large, to live in moderate retirement, to maintain their independence and employ their time to good purpose, where all around invites to feasting and conviviality. Social intercourse and affection should always connect man with his fellow-creatures. It is, however, to be lamented, that people should imagine we refuse their friendship and kindness, when we but wish to avoid the loss of time and the loss of health. No man of business can write a book excepting he withdraws for a time from the bustle of social life. He will make but little progress, if he goes every evening to his club, if he is present at every party, and is at home to every visitor to whom he does not fail to return the compliment. If he were sick they would be under the necessity of leaving him to himself; then possibly his indisposition might not prevent the exercise of his mental faculties, and employment which he loves might afford him the most amusement and consolation. Good-natured persons, from whose thoughts nothing is farther than to offend, are often severely mortified when, amidst the petulance oc-

casioned by sickness, you give them to understand, that you are never comfortable but when alone, that you are never oppressed with languor but in society, and that you are animated with new energy when all your acquaintance imagine you to be dead. Many to whom this state of the soul is totally incomprehensible, complain in their turn of unpardonable rudeness, of sins of omission against all established customs and usages. They have sufficient discernment to discover every thing that is passing in the world, but they cannot conceive, that a sensible man should ever entertain the idea of writing a book.

Such complaints would be suppressed, if people only reflected that he, who, for a time, is desirous of exerting himself for the accomplishment of some important object, must be suffered to enjoy uninterrupted retirement, and that a writer who is now anxious to shun all social amusement, may in a very short time seek it with equal solicitude.

The established forms and rules of social life, however insipid, should not be violated, if we wish to pass through the world with comfort. "But," as a beloved female friend once wrote to me, "too great aversion to the rules of politeness and the follies of the world, too much delicacy of taste, too great sensibility, too many wants for the mind and heart, are prejudicial to our happiness and repose; they agitate the waves of the sea of life, which should remain tranquil and placid that its waters may not be disturbed. You must not offend the living, in order that you may converse only with the dead. Languor and vexation are banished from society; serenity, love and tranquillity will

accompany you in the career of life ; you will both enjoy and impart happiness, if you carry meekness and forbearance with you into society, and make a suitable return to the endearments of affection."

It is doubtless as necessary that the propensity to Solitude should be subject to the dictates of reason as the propensity to society ; and it is no small merit, particularly in the man of business, the statesman and the philosopher, to frequent mixed society, to gain its esteem and to regulate their conduct in conformity to its principles.

We should seek to obtain the love of all men ; we must not however surrender our independence, or resign our right to retire from the world, without shutting ourselves up in anti-social seclusion. We ought therefore, to associate with suitable company, that we may give offence to none ; we should bring with us from the world all the good it affords and render ourselves as serviceable as we can to our fellow-creatures. At the same time we must possess sufficient energy to seek the calm of retirement, to offer a silent sacrifice to God and to wisdom ; and thus we shall always withdraw into Solitude from taste and inclination and not at the suggestions of petulance and ill-humor.

*APPENDIX.**

A SURVEY of my whole life will be sufficient to shew what pretensions I have to write on the subject of Solitude. In my earliest youth I was solicitous to enjoy solemn silence and rural tranquillity. The view of a convent filled me with delight. I breathed more freely in the recesses of the forest or beneath the solitary ruins of the ancient castle. Even in the later years of my life, amidst incessant activity and exertion, repose was my constant wish; for my labors always exceeded my strength. Since my removal to Germany my health has scarcely ever been good. The constant longing for hours free from pain and restraint is not calculated to produce a social disposition, or an ardent desire for empty dissipations. I still extend my arms in vain towards some peaceful hut on this side the silent grave, towards some sequestered bower, in whose shade I wish to tell how passionately I am enamor-

* The following pages contain the substance of the eighth chapter of the original, which, being totally unconnected with the plan of the work, was at first intended to be omitted in the translation. On further consideration it was, however, resolved to subjoin it in the present form. The many amiable traits of the author's character which it exhibits, together with the particulars relative to his extraordinary antagonist, and the motives which induced him to compose the present work, will not be perused without interest. T.

ed of Solitude, how that has often been the only confidant of all my cares, how that alone has frequently converted the pangs of affliction into pleasing melancholy.

I never lived in anti-social seclusion. All earthly felicity was of no value, I was overwhelmed with distress, the cup of sorrow was never out of my hand, when I had no sympathizing heart, no kind and tender soul to whom I could communicate my thoughts and my sentiments, my joy and my sorrow, my wishes and my hopes. I have enjoyed every other earthly happiness, but nothing was equal to this felicity at my joyful return from the fatigues of the day. I never lived in a country uninhabited by men, but never in my life did I seek empty pleasures and tumultuous diversions.

Tranquillity and retirement were my first and they are my last love. When a boy I had but one friend; he was an excellent youth* and to me he was all in all. He was hated and persecuted by the rest of our school-fellows, and I frequently took his part against them all. In his company I delighted to frequent the most solitary places. With

* This friend of my youth, whose name is Daniel Stapfer, is still living. He is one of the most profound philosophers that I am acquainted with in any country, and is minister of the cathedral of Bern, in Switzerland. The public possesses no literary production of his talents. A sermon, which he held in our little native town, Brugg, and which was printed not by his, but by my direction, in the year 1755, filled Wieland with such enthusiasm, that he wrote to my friend, who was before a stranger to him; "that he spoke from his pulpit at Brugg, like a Pericles at Athens, with words powerful as the tempest, and which left behind them a dagger in the heart."

him I lived on the roof of my father's house, among ruined walls and castles, in forests, among rocks and by the side of rivers. To him alone I was attached, and him only I loved. When, after an interval of many years, I returned to my native town, this friend was then minister of the place. He was the intimate of my family, and we were happy, for our mode of life was still very retired.

A small monument of that early period of my life, the germ of the present work on Solitude* is now lying before me. In the weak language of youthful inexperience, I recommended in that work the rational fruition of the fleeting moments, the profitable cultivation of the most important sciences, and I poured forth my sweetest sentiments in behalf of religion and virtue. I composed it in one of the cheerful months of summer, in a garret beneath my paternal roof, where I neither saw nor heard any thing but a couple of solitary birds. My family, in the bosom of which I enjoyed domestic felicity, was absent on an excursion for a considerable time. All my acquaintances now exclaimed more loudly than ever that I must not always continue at home, for there I was alone; that I ought to take part in the amusements of my fellow-citizens, and exercise myself with them in shooting at a mark, and thus make myself known in the world.

I did not follow their advice, and in my native town this conduct gave great offence. I was always somewhat obstinate in my manner of thinking. But now that I reside in a city, the inhabitants of

* Reflections on Solitude, by Dr. John George Zimmermann, physician to the town of Brugg, Zurich, 1756, 110 pages 8vo.

which know something of life, they lament the singularity of my sentiments with great philanthropy and unaffected compassion.

Upheld, as at present, by a loving arm, I thirty years ago pursued my solitary and silent course through the world. The friend of my early youth was our constant companion. He and I, together with two other friends of similar sentiments, experienced the same treatment from the ignorant part of our fellow-citizens, that my friend and I had in our juvenile years to endure from our school-fellows. An honorable appointment tore this friend from my native town and from my arms. I was inconsolable and to alleviate my sorrow composed my work on Experience in Physic; and two years afterwards removed to Hanover.

Here, among so much good company, I might have learned the art of fashionable life. But in the midst of such a social city, amidst so many enlightened, friendly, benevolent and amiable people, my continual indisposition produced a constant aversion to large companies. I had, nevertheless, abundant opportunity to see and to observe the inmost recesses of the hearts of men of all ranks and complections, in the too widely extended circle of my profession and during my numerous journies. I thus obtained a more accurate acquaintance than I wished with the ways of the world. Notwithstanding my natural freedom and openness, I never lived in the close intimacy of personal intercourse but with very few. It requires the utmost exertion of which I am capable, to testify joy at things which give me no pleasure. It is not without the greatest violence to my feelings that I am sometimes obliged

to be present at numerous card-parties, brilliant entertainments and tumultuous diversions.

I am, however, far from feeling any aversion to those among whom I live. They, in whom I see so much that is good, in whom every excellent quality, every talent, every qualification, every virtue, every expression of genius and courage, delights me, are not the cause of my unsociable disposition. The evil lies entirely in myself. I am sensible that in numerous companies it is our duty to contribute towards every pleasure, and to participate in every enjoyment; and this I feel myself incapable of doing.

Retirement and quiet, friendly intercourse with persons of any class was ever my only wish and my only pleasure. My professional avocations and my situation in the world, never, indeed, permitted me to live so retired as I wished. Still I retained the inclination to treat fully of the real value of Solitude, to shew the felicity it affords, and to inspire my fellow-creatures with the love of a mode of life, which, if rationally employed, I esteem above all things, and which was always so particularly suited to my own taste. After the publication of my first work on Solitude, which experienced a favorable reception in many countries, I was but too sensible that it contained a very imperfect investigation of the subject.

With slow steps I therefore began as early as the year 1757 to consider Solitude in a philosophical manner; and was consequently obliged to examine what might be objected against it. Had I acted agreeably to my inclination, I should have poured forth my whole soul in its praise. Regard for truth, however, obliged me to balance the duties of

social life with the love of Solitude. In order thoroughly to study this pleasing subject I then applied myself to the reading of ecclesiastical history. I likewise perused several of the fathers and many lives of the saints. My other occupations, and particularly the duties of my situation, prevented me from making much progress in Switzerland. At Hanover I relinquished every thing that did not relate to medicine, and renounced all intention of again appearing as an author. It was not till the conclusion of the year 1772 that, merely to amuse my mind under the attack of a cruel nervous complaint, I extracted from the observations which I had committed to writing in Switzerland, the well-known fragment on Solitude, which in the course of the following year was re-printed.

I humbly intreat the reader's pardon for relating so many circumstances that cannot interest five persons in the world. But so much I was obliged to say, in order to shew whether I deserve the character of being the most execrable reviler and enemy of Solitude, as is asserted by the celebrated Obereit.

Jacob Hermann Obereit, a man very little known in Germany and yet very highly praised by many distinguished characters, was exceedingly exasperated against me on account of the Fragment on Solitude, which I published in 1773. He took a small detached portion instead of considering the whole, and this partial view excited in him such an extraordinary indignation, that at length, in the year 1781, I felt myself impelled to write the present work on Solitude. Obereit, ever anxious to engage me in a contest with him, tried by all the means in his power to irritate me. Six years elapsed before he succeeded.

The first step he took against me was in the year 1775, when he sent me, by express, a very prolix refutation of my little tract on Solitude, and begged, intreated and conjured me, as he was not acquainted with the booksellers of Germany, for his sake to cause this refutation (in which he had loaded me with abuse) to be printed.

My fragment on Solitude was grounded on history, facts and observations. Obereit, who appears to have an imperfect knowledge of history, says in the scurrilous pamphlet which he sent me, that I might procure it to be printed: "the fragment on Solitude contains nothing but artful legends and plausible stories of the author's own invention. His omniscient and yet short-sighted reason wished, in the haughty pride of assumed dominion over the consciences of mankind, to reverse every thing that is good. He makes cold, scholastic deductions and writes with the style of an oracle. Every thing which he does not understand he treats with such superciliousness as if he were the ruler over the whole church, and expels one species of fanaticism by one still more absurd. In his excessive wisdom he does not even know the alphabet of the simplest of the saints. As a philosopher of the new manufacture, he is an enemy of simplicity and of women. He labors to confine mankind to a stoical love, and dreads enthusiasm more than death, hell and the devil. He aspires after supreme honor, power and dominion with Catholic arrogance. Wrapped in his self-conceit, he is an utter stranger to the perfectly childlike love of God, and knows very little of friendship. The sainted fervors of the poor mystic nuns are totally incomprehensible to his proud, unbending reason. To

appearance his are the smooth hands of Jacob, but his voice is that of Esau." My whole system concerning Solitude," he added, "was a card-house which he, Dr. Jacob Hermann Obereit, could destroy with a breath whenever he pleased."

This lecture was rather severe. Obereit acompanied it with a very long and still more cutting letter, in which he tells me "that I have only caught at Solitude but not enjoyed and experienced its advantages; that I have perused the works on that subject in a very cursory and superficial manner, that my work is quite in the style of the Parisian philosophy, and bears as great a resemblance to those of Voltaire himself as one egg to another; that I cannot therefore take it amiss if he, doctor Jacob Hermann Obereit should, as one thoroughly acquainted with this unknown region of Solitude, enter the lists against me to revenge my uncourteous attack on the anachorets and mystics; that let me write or invent any work, either long or short, on Solitude, it would be utterly destitute of truth and contain nothing but philosophy *à la Parisienne*. Lastly, and to conclude, he, doctor Jacob Hermann Obereit, presented me the most affectionate compliments from his Psyche Empirea, and informed me, that this Psyche was descended from an ancient German princely house." Psyche, however, was but the daughter of a lace-maker.

A respectable divine was once loaded with injuries and abuse, to which he made no reply. "Why do you not answer me?" cried his enemy. "You," replied the divine with great composure, "are the master of your mouth, and I of my ears; I do not hear you."

Such was Obereit's exclamation when I was silent. He continually menaced me with more letters; and at length intreated me for the sake of God, the last judgment and the sufferings of Christ, to print his work.

I accordingly sent the work to the press as well as the letter with which it was accompanied. Without erasing a line, or altering a single word, I left the whole as it was; I merely gave it a more intelligible title, and wrote for it a mild and civil preface.

I however made no reply to Obereit's letters. This, notwithstanding the peacefulness of my conduct towards him, offended his childish vanity, and excited his utmost indignation. He then proceeded some years afterwards to his second step, and that produced some effect.

In 1781, appeared a perfect romance on Solitude, written by him against me.* The editor and publisher of this romance was M. Kleuker of Osnabrück, a young Westphalian philosopher, whom I had seen at school at Hanover, and whom his teacher had described to me as a hopeful and amiable youth. Kleuker revised the work, corrected the coarseness of Obereit's style, and out of a galimaufry, which nobody would have perused, he made a book admirably adapted to a certain class of readers. He suffered all the abusive language against me to remain, and gave the whole work the air of a review.

In this book I was treated with very little cere-

* It was entitled: "The Solitude of the Conquerors of the world, thoroughly investigated by a laconic philanthropist."

mony. Speaking of me, he says: "He is possessed by Beelzebub himself. None ever wrote so furiously against Solitude. He is a liar and a father of lies, and his understanding is enveloped in thick darkness. He is a rash and obstinate man, who leads his readers astray; a materialist; a bold supporter of the greatest absurdities; a short-sighted apostle of society; a friend to the continual tumult of boisterous conviviality. The anachorets in the Egyptian deserts excite his envy; and he is not worthy to loose the latchets of the shoes of the meanest of those anachorets. He can as little endure Solitude in others as enjoy it himself. The society of himself is to him the most miserable and the most intolerable of all human society, and far below that of the most wretched of mortals; it is worse than the society of wild beasts, which however, are able to find pleasure in the solitary recesses of the forest. He is a foe to all religion of the heart, and nothing is capable of saving him, but the severest lash, not only of satire, but rather of the Almighty himself."

Obereit must have grossly misunderstood me. He who knew me not, who was a stranger to my love of Solitude and retirement, would not else have accused me of being a friend to the continual tumult of boisterous conviviality. He would not have said "that I could as little endure Solitude in others as enjoy it myself; that the society of myself was intolerable to me, and worse than the society of wild beasts, which however are able to find pleasure in the solitary recesses of the forest." Had he known me he would have been convinced that it was not a taste for noisy pleasures, not an attach-

ment to the tumult of the world which had impelled me to seek in my earliest youth the retreats of Solitude, and to write on the subject at such distant periods of my life. He would not have taken the introduction to the present work, a very small fragment of my observations, for the total sum of my thoughts and sentiments on Solitude. It is therefore merely for want of understanding, that this acute observer could not perceive with what sensibility my soul would again pour itself forth in Solitude.

I was a thousand times misunderstood in the world without feeling on that account any uneasiness. How often have the envious and the malignant endeavored to injure my reputation and to blast my honor: but I smiled at all their attempts. All the calumny and abuse levelled against me by my enemies I invariably regarded as beneath my notice. Nothing but Obereit's pious physiognomy was capable of rousing me to the serious conflict. He who formerly took up arms against me for the honor of mysticism and a solitary life, and again entered the lists in vindication of the holy rabble; he who had branded me as the most inveterate enemy of Solitude, the most execrable foe of all the monks and nuns, and would have rejoiced to see me precipitated alive into hell; he will now certainly comprehend why nothing has for these many years afforded me such pleasure, as this opportunity of publicly declaring that, amidst all the intrusions of ceremonious visits, amidst all the opposition of duty and inclination, I yet love and prize Solitude above every other blessing.

For calumniating me, every individual of a cer-

tain description of persons who are frequently mentioned in this work may expect applause. I was therefore not in the least surprised, when I was informed that there were persons who regarded Obereit's victory over me as complete.

Such, too, was the opinion of Obereit himself. But how would he have been refuted, if, without taking any notice of him or his libel, I had contented myself with printing the present work on Solitude! A still greater victory was, however, reserved for me. Obereit, that profound philosopher, that model of purity and perfection, had not only sprung forth from the depths of impenetrable obscurity, and cut me down with his two-edged sword; but having apparently silenced me for ever, he had been at the pains to traduce, defame and calumniate me throughout all Germany. At length this hero, this luminary exalted above all philosophers, as the sun above the stars, this natural theologian, who possessed such an intimate knowledge of all the recesses of the human heart, suddenly appeared in person, with all the glory by which he is surrounded, in the city of Hanover, at the time when I had composed the greatest part of this work on Solitude. He saw me and he was reconciled.

Biographical traits of any singular character are always a good commentary on his doctrines and opinions, and a sure guide to the causes of his manner of thinking, his singularity and originality. A representation of the man leads to a much better developement of them, than tedious and scholastic disputation. Obereit's anachoretical life will interest all the lovers of the history of the christian church, of which he set up for the modern reformer, and for all those

who take delight in the extravagant freaks of the human mind.

Perhaps I may succeed in shewing how the great luminary, Obereit, became what he is. Perhaps his portrait, which I here present as a companion to the life of the great Anthony, will afford the most positive testimony of the beneficial and injurious influence of Solitude on men of this description.

St. Jacob Hermann Obereit first saw the light of the world, whose light he now is, upwards of half a century since at Arbon in Switzerland. The father of this once great anachoret, but who has now deserted the anachoretical school, lived in the service of a merchant at Arbon, and afterwards removed to Lindau on the lake of Constance, where he was appointed receiver of the revenues of the city.

His father had a great predilection for mysteries of every kind, particularly for alchymy, and was fond of reading books on those subjects. His mother manifested an excessive hatred of all ecclesiastics, and not without reason. She and her husband were cruelly persecuted by the pastors at Lindau, because they were considered as pietists and dissenters, that is, people who did not believe the words of the divines of Lindau to be the words of God. In their orthodox fury and indignation, those reverend characters excommunicated the elder Obereit for a year, because he had the charitable idea to write on the restoration of all things.

Saint Obereit received the rudiments of his education from his father, who related to him much from Cornelius Nepos, Plutarch, and Valerius Max-

imus, but far more from Thomas a Kempis and Poiret; partly in the public schools and partly, if I may credit my information, in a barber's shop. According to a rude custom, many celebrated German surgeons of old were initiated into their art in similar academies, where, however, they contracted a manner, of which, during their whole lives they were unable to divest themselves.

Beneath the paternal roof St. Obereit ranged himself under the standards of the alchymists and mystics. The father perused by day and by night the works of the eccentric Peter Poiret, the universal luminary and the philosopher of peace, and the son caught the sparks that fell from this torch. The magistrates of Lindau, therefore, conceived the idea of sending this ardent, youthful philosopher to Berlin, that his genius might there be cooled by the study of surgery and the obstetric art.

This design was put in execution; though, as it is said, not with the best success, because geniuses commonly learn nothing but just what they please. With the greater ardor St. Obereit applied himself to the study of chemistry under Pott.

Having attained maturity he resolved to make trial of a military life for a few years, to inure himself to hardships and to exercise his courage, constancy and magnanimity. This fact he himself relates in his work, if not in a majestic strain, at least in one uncommonly heroic and pathetic. In what country St. Obereit performed the duties of regimental surgeon I know not; but this I know, that he soon afterwards examined all the different forms of government among mankind, to discover

under which of them he should prefer to live. He decided in favor of that of Sparta.

Immediately after his return, not to Sparta, but to Lindau, St. Obereit was appointed *accoucheur* and surgeon to the hospital of that place. The duties of neither of these stations were however very agreeable to him, for instead of studying surgery and midwifery, he devoted his whole attention to philosophy, the fathers of the church, the lives of the saints and fanatics of every description. He wrote letters of tremendous length, and indicative of his profound and extensive knowledge, to all the literati, and with a passion which almost overwhelmed all his other passions he applied himself to poetry and alchymy. This conduct was not the most pleasing to his patients. His various avocations left him considerable leisure in which his *central energies* increased in an extraordinary degree. In his father's house, he read all the fanatical and philosophical works which fell into his hands, reflected on them all and disputed the truth of none, formed systems and plans for literary journals and applied to many for assistance, but they all declined the honor.

St. Obereit's friends and patrons entreated him for God's sake not to print any of his performances; for, though they manifested great energy and originality, they were all mystical, fanatical, and unintelligible. The literati, whom he continued with undaunted courage to bombard with his letters, wondered at the variety of his attainments, and pitied him because he was totally destitute of the gift of luminous arrangement and style.

By means of a borrowed style, and the assistance which is kindly furnished by others, St. Obereit is now the luminary of a certain class of readers. At that time most of the literati shunned his tremendous correspondence. Yet our celebrated Wieland, who was then chancellor of the university of Biberach in Swabia, presented Obereit, whose vanity has always been a conspicuous feature of his character, the degree of doctor of philosophy. This pompous title created considerable envy at Lindau; but nevertheless, since that period Obereit has always been called by the dignified appellation of doctor.

All doctors of philosophy, indeed, are not acquainted with the decencies of social life. In the year 1762, when Sulzer the philosopher, Lavater the physiognomist, and Füssli, the Shakspear of the painters of the present age, passed through Lindau on their way from Zurich to Berlin, Obereit instantly repaired to the post-house, with all his pockets full of manuscripts. These men Dr. Obereit amused several hours with his philosophical, mystical, theological, physical, mathematical, medical, chemical and alchymical attainments, and according to custom drew one manuscript after the other out of his pocket to read to them.

Lavater was uneasy and sighed, Füssli swore, and Sulzer lost his temper. Obereit, attentive only to his subject, continued to read without intermission. Sulzer meanwhile fell asleep, and when he awoke, finding that Obereit was still reading, his indignation was raised to such a degree, that he ordered the honest doctor to go home. Obereit departed and they all thanked God for their deliverance. At four the next morning, when the car-

riage was ready and the travellers were just going to set off, some one knocked with great violence at Sulzer's door,—Doctor Obereit entered with a great bundle of papers under his arm, and as my friend Sulzer assured me, he addressed him, after many low bows, in the following words; "I am likewise a poet."

He certainly possessed no poetic talents; but he has composed a vast quantity of verses, which for these thirty years have only been waiting for a publisher. Under the pressure of many misfortunes his mind undoubtedly attained superior elevation by this method of giving vent to his sentiments and ideas. Fortune was long unkind to him, but he defied all the vicissitudes of fate with truly Spartan courage and anachoretical fortitude.

When oppressed with penury he applied himself to study. The hope of discovering the philosopher's stone enabled him to struggle with all the afflictions of life. At the period of his greatest distress he once wrote to a friend, from Lindau, that he was sure of discovering the philosopher's stone in a fortnight.

This object he has however not yet attained. Amidst these brilliant hopes and prospects of wealth, Obereit's father lost his situation, and his family was plunged into the greatest distress. On this occasion the character of our philosopher shone with distinguished lustre. So far from being overwhelmed with despair, he was rather inspired with fresh courage, applied himself with greater diligence to his professional avocations, and performed many extraordinary cures. His patients however were not very fond of him, for he never hesitated to

tell any person the most unpleasant truths to his face; he therefore employed himself day and night in his study in his own business and that of others, and all that he thus procured he appropriated to the relief of his parents.

His health declined amidst these laudable exertions. He was attacked by a paralytic affection, from which he never perfectly recovered. The good Obereit and his excellent brother, meanwhile supported their aged parents. Their house, in which our philosopher continued to reside till his father died, was the abode of tranquillity and happiness.

Religion, alchymy, mysticism and love contributed to give Obereit that serenity, that fortitude and elevation of mind with which he dissipated all the clouds of fate. A passion which meets with a suitable return is, as we well know, alone sufficient to alleviate every misfortune; and Obereit, like all persons of a fervid imagination, is of an extremely amorous disposition. Psyche Empirea, as he called her, was the daughter of a lace-maker at Lindau, in whom he found the highest and brightest qualities that ever adorned a female mind. He inspired his Psyche with his own sentiments and initiated her into his own philosophy. She was handsome, good-tempered and docile. Obereit made proposals of marriage to Psyche, but the lace-maker thought his daughter too good for Obereit, and obstinately opposed the wishes of the enamored pair. Love now inspired our philosopher with common sense; he carried off his Psyche without discovery from Lindau to Switzerland, and married her. In the state of matrimony, he however

led, as he himself assured me, a life perfectly platonic.

Greater trials and greater enterprises now followed in uninterrupted succession. St. Obereit possessed no means of subsistence. At Zürich he met with friends in some people of rank and respectability who advised him to seek his fortune among their vassals at Winterthur. St. Obereit immediately resolved to give instruction at Winterthur to persons of both sexes, and that in the philosophy of life. He accordingly announced to all Winterthur, by means of a printed prospectus, his public lectures on this singular philosophy. Unfortunately the good philosopher was unacquainted with life, and had himself no experience on the subject he pretended to teach. Instead therefore of attending his lectures, the whole town only laughed at the eccentric professor. At the earnest request of Obereit's friends the programma, the most ridiculous performance that ever issued from the pen of man, was suppressed.

Obereit, unconcerned about every thing, continued to inure himself to hardship and the exercise of disinterested magnanimity. His felicity was augmented by love and by his sanguine hopes of success in his alchymical pursuits. But his wife died after a union of eight weeks, of a consumption. Her behavior during her illness was that of an angel, and Obereit bore her loss like a hero. "The union of souls," as he said to me with great truth, "is destroyed neither by separation nor by death." The very night in which his wife expired he was heard singing for hours together with all his power. This was great; but the people of Winter-

thur, who heard his strains, made some very stupid comments on this music.

Obereit was mathematically certain of the deification of his wife, and at a period of such distress to others, this idea ensured to his mind perpetual serenity. His life was now more retired than before. He read much, and in the evening, like the great Theophrastus Paracelsus, he frequently returned home intoxicated. But he now applied his heart and mind with greater ardor than ever to the noble art of making gold.

For this purpose he found at Winterthur a partner who had indeed received a caution on the subject from my friend, Dr. Hirzel of Zurich, but who was otherwise a prudent and an honest man. This rather saturnine partner in Obereit's scheme, an apothecary at Winterthur, took our doctor into his laboratory and afterwards into his house ; and St. Obereit with the greatest enthusiasm assured him, that they should discover the long-sought stone of the philosophers.

To this search Obereit diligently applied himself, and the apothecary attentively observed his proceedings. St. Obereit always saw, as he had before discovered in mysticism and anachoretical seclusion, great things which the eye of none but an adept could ever perceive. The apothecary, on the contrary, endeavored to prove to the doctor the insignificance of all his discoveries, and usually foretold the natural result of all his operations. But with the enlightened Obereit nothing was natural ; he borrowed names from the *central* philosophy for all his chemical products, or christened them after

the stars and then imagined that objects were what he had denominated them.

The apothecary was, at length, weary of this ridiculous process, and acquainted Obereit that he must in future pay for all the materials that he required for his operations. The sagacious apothecary hoped by that measure to deter the doctor from the pursuit. It was, however, ineffectual. St. Obereit paid honestly for every thing and continued his pursuit with the same success. At length the apothecary lost all patience; he reproached the doctor in the bitterest terms for squandering his time and his money in such a silly and unprofitable manner; he swore, at the same time striking the table violently with his fist, (so that the terrified Obereit had nearly dropped his wig into the fire) that he would suffer him to remain in his house no longer, if he was resolved to continue to seek gold in smoke. St. Obereit at first made a face as if the indignant apothecary was tearing his heart from his bosom; but, like an experienced philosopher, he adapted himself to time and circumstances, and with great resignation and the utmost diligence, again directed his attention to his studies.

The constant hope and expectation of great events affords high felicity. In this state Obereit lived, and for this reason he diffused around him at Winterthur nothing but happiness and good-humor. In his intercourse with all he was mild and patient, but at the same time tranquil and cheerful; and not a moment of his life was clouded with melancholy and hypochondria. To every one, who only gave him a good word, he was civil, friendly and affectionate. In the society of intimate acquaint-

ance he was full of fire, energy and animation. His appearance, even at a distance, was highly ludicrous and diverting.

Obereit waited patiently for the rising of a new alchymical sun, and he was not disappointed. Captain Bürki, a wealthy distiller in the canton of Bern, unexpectedly invited him to his laboratory, and at the same time appointed him tutor to his children. Our philosopher was almost frantic with joy, though his friends at Winterthur had the honesty to tell him that no person in the world was more unfit for a tutor than he. Regardless of their advice and buoyed with high expectations, he repaired to the residence of Captain Bürki; and, after an absence of six weeks, returned in disgrace to Winterthur.

Obereit was never greater than under disappointments; for in times of the severest trial he found a world in himself, and likewise knew by long experience that relief was at the door. Such for a time was again the case; till he unexpectedly received an invitation to Bern, from a man of rank and affluence, and a member of the government of that place, with whom Obereit, since his journey to Captain Bürki, had corresponded on the subject of alchymy. He now imagined that the great reformation of the world was at hand, and successively saw in spirit a desire after his doctrines in the inhabitants of Bern, the complete accomplishment of all his expectations, the commencement and the termination of the great revolution by means of alchymy, mysticism and his works, in the very city where the greatest precautions are taken to guard against revolutions. He immediately packed up

all his effects, gave the last farewell embrace to his friends at Winterthur, and had already reached Zurich. A hostile genius had meanwhile restored reason to her sovereignty over the mind of the senator of Bern, and the latter immediately sent back all our reformer's baggage to Zurich.

All the billows of fate now overwhelmed Obereit: but they broke over his head, and he, as usual, swam through them in triumph. Zurich was his port in this tempest. An excellent and philanthropic physician and able chemist, the brother of the great Lavater, placed him in his laboratory. Here he remained a whole year in the enjoyment of inexpressible happiness and content. During his residence at Zurich he likewise wrote his defence of the monks and anachorets, entitled, "The Solitude of the Conquerors of the World," that everlasting monument of his genius; and in the spring of 1781 he repaired to Dresden to see his brother.*

* His fame preceded him. A rumour was propagated throughout all Leipzig that a prophet who was able to foretel all future events would soon arrive in Saxony from Zurich; and Obereit made his appearance. An inhabitant of Leipzig, a man of rank and opulence, but rather superstitious, and who, though nearly eighty years of age, was extremely desirous of living a little longer, invited the wonderful man to dinner immediately on his arrival. At table the conversation naturally turned on prophecies. Obereit with more honesty than prudence said: "there are many people who imagine they can foretel future events, without however possessing any extraordinary gifts. It was for instance easy to suppose, without supernatural inspiration, that that gentleman (pointing to his host) would be the first that would die out of the company then at table." This innocent remark was a thunder-stroke to the master of the

"We imagined," says one of the greatest men in Germany in a letter which I lately received from him, "that by the light of reason, we had diffused instruction and so enlightened the country, that fanaticism would not again venture to shew its face. But we see that from the opposite side of the horizon, the night again approaches, accompanied with all its apparitions. With horror we perceive that the evil is most active and most powerful; that fanaticism always operates while reason only speaks. Lord Shaftesbury was wrong when he imagined, that wit and humor are the most powerful means of opposing the progress of pernicious superstition. Ridicule expels prejudice only in appearance. For fear of its shafts, people seek only to conceal their weakness. They even themselves join in the laugh and yet in the privacy of the chamber, as I have myself seen, they are the same deluded and deluding fanatics!"

Such, as I was very recently informed by a man who has not many equals in the world, is the state of reason in many very enlightened Protestant towns in Germany. Hence it may be seen, that Obereit appeared among us just at the right time. To make gold is an art studied in many parts of Germany with as much avidity as that of flying by the French.* Every thing is prepared in this inven-

house. Such was his alarm, that he rose from the table, retired to another apartment, and directed his servants never to admit the strange prophet into his house again, though he had only the preceding day given him a general invitation.

* The art of making gold was of old a favorite object with the Germans; and even the great Leibnitz was in his

tive country for the final discovery of the philosopher's stone. The Germans will certainly find it, if it is to be found; for Dr. Price poisoned himself in England only because he was unable to prove that he had discovered it. All the hands and the hearts of our alchymists will therefore be lifted up to St. Obereit, all will be anxious to possess him when his merits become known. Invitations will pour in upon him from all quarters, and thus every thing will concur to produce that great reformation of the world by means of this modern reformer.

St. Obereit resided for a considerable time in Lusatia, in the house of a gentleman whose friendship he had acquired by his works. In June, 1784, he suffered his light to shine at Leipzig, and at length quitting that city, as he said, for ever, he repaired to his old friend, Wieland, at Weimar.

But St. Obereit's residence in polished Saxony has

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youth attacked by this *mania*. He was a member and secretary of a society of alchymists at Nürnberg, to which he presented a memoir, whose contents he was himself unable to state, being composed entirely of unmeaning alchymical terms. Leibnitz did this out of necessity, and the society allowed him a salary as secretary; but, according to the expression of one of his latest eulogists, he soon abandoned those murderers of sound reason. In that part of Germany which is now with such zeal and success purging itself from superstition, at Vienna, the taste for alchymical pursuits was in the first quarter of the eighteenth century as general, as it is in the last quarter in the Protestant part of Germany. Every person of rank and fortune at Vienna then kept a domestic alchymist; and for this reason the celebrated and witty lady Mary Wortley Montague observed that the laity of Vienna seek to recover by this transubstantiation what the clergy deprive them of by the other.

effected an almost total change in the great man. His energy is fled and his Swiss rudeness is converted into Saxon urbanity. He appears at the courts of princes, and recommends medicines for restoring youth to aged females; and these remedies are employed by ladies in many large towns, with christian confidence and unlimited hope. Obereit has likewise become tolerant since his total desertion of the anachoretic life. He is no longer the knight of the fiery figure. With his eremitical disposition this ex-anachoret lives in the midst of the world, and seats himself with dignified assurance at the tables of princes, as at those of simple citizens, between dissenters and infidels, friends and foes.

I shall beg permission to produce a proof of his spirit of toleration, in a manner that would certainly not be expected, and then I shall close this trifling contribution towards the biography of this extraordinary man.

On the 5th of August, 1782, I stepped into the shop of a celebrated goldsmith at Hanover, to buy a few trifling articles. While I was speaking with this tradesman, a singular figure, in a long, blue, great coat, yellow slippers, a small, round worsted wig and without a hat, entered the shop, and after making a low bow, with the most extraordinary contortions of his body and arms, placed himself like a pillar beside me, and looked at me apparently with great curiosity. I pretended not to observe him. But I was wonderfully struck by the only glance which I cast upon the man. He had the air of a mendicant Jew. By his slippers I, however, perceived, that he was an inmate of the goldsmith; and that he was not a man of the common

stamp, I was convinced, at the first view, by his clear and elevated forehead, his honest face, his lively, bold, handsome and yet sometimes downcast eyes, his friendly mouth, the ludicrous and yet dignified motion of his head and his Spanish gait. While I was calmly conversing with the goldsmith concerning his goods, I burned with secret curiosity to know who was the extraordinary man, that stood beside me, and whom, I was certain, I had never seen before. I turned my eyes to look at him once more, and he was gone.

"For heaven's sake," said I to the goldsmith, "who is that man?" With a significant smile and looking stedfastly in my face, probably in the expectation that I should drop down with terror, the goldsmith replied: "It is Doctor Obereit."

"Obereit, the conqueror of the world?" I rejoined. "The same," replied the goldsmith. "Quick, quick, fetch him!" said I briskly.—The doctor entered in his yellow slippers. I gave him my hand, told him that I was extremely glad to see him for the first time in my life, and after some general conversation, requested him to do me the honor of calling on me in the afternoon.

He was punctual to the time. I received him with politeness and respect. "What good spirit, Dr. Obereit," said I, "brings you to Hanover, to the house of a goldsmith, who possesses an inquisitive mind and is a very expert artist?"

"The goldsmith has read my 'Conquerors of the World,' and that work has gained me many friends:" said Obereit with a loud, slow, majestic voice, and in the thundering tone of an ancient Lacedæmonian.

I pretended not to perceive the stroke which he thus aimed at me, and only replied: "You, Dr. Obereit and the goldsmith deserved to be acquainted with each other."

I then turned the conversation to other subjects. It was agreeable. His laconic bluntness pleased me, though he sometimes looked at me as the angel Gabriel at a worm, or a pedagogue at his scholars. At length I requested him to return at night and sup with me. He promised that he would, and we parted with the greatest cordiality.

I had scarcely opened my eyes the following day, when I was struck with the idea that the man whom I had treated with such cordiality was ignorant how I was lashing him in my intended work. Two days afterwards I received a friendly note from him,* in answer to which I assured him with

* Obereit is, at the bottom, a good-natured man, as is evinced by many of the circumstances of his life, which I have introduced. Such, likewise, was the impression which his physiognomy produced, when I saw him for the first time, and this impression was confirmed in every subsequent interview. The greatest good-nature likewise prevails in the note he sent me two days after his first visit, which forms a striking contrast with the abuse with which he publicly overwhelmed me.

As far as I know I am the only person in the world who has experienced such harsh treatment from Obereit. But what caused this otherwise good-natured man to attack me with such virulence? He probably acted in that manner for the sake of religion, for a fanatic always imagines that he performs a service to heaven by crushing an infidel. But, in a world which certainly contains more dangerous writers than I am, why should I be the only individual who excited in Obereit such outrageous indignation, though I conducted myself towards him in such an indulgent, and, if I may be

sincerity, that he had made the day of our first interview one of the happiest of my life, and that it gave me the highest pleasure to receive with cordiality an original character by whom I had been treated with such asperity. At the same time I maintained my right to defend myself, if I should ever enjoy health and leisure to undertake my vindication.

Obereit remained two months at Hanover, and was inexpressibly happy. In every company he was received with kindness and respect. I likewise saw him occasionally, and we behaved towards each other with reciprocal kindness and forbearance. To mitigate the severity of my literary menace, I sought, by every method in my power, to give him pleasure.

Having invited him to dinner, I took that opportunity of telling him what effect his book had produced on me, that it had immediately roused me to prove in an extensive work whether I was an enemy of Solitude; that this occupation had restored me for a time to health of body and mind, how sincerely a lady who was present rejoiced on this occasion, and regarded Dr. Obereit as my best physician and my greatest benefactor; how often

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allowed to say so, in such an uncommonly friendly manner? What filled him with such a spirit of revenge as he has manifested in his work on Solitude? I acknowledge myself at a loss to account for it; for how should I be able to divine all that passes in Obereit's head! I shall merely suppose that I wounded his pride; because I know from experience, on other occasions, that nothing irritates a self-conceited surgeon so much, as when a physician neglects to answer his letters.

and how earnestly she, on that account, intreated me to spare him; but nevertheless I was obliged to disregard her tender remonstrances; that there were many sharp passages in my work, which I should not erase; and added, smiling, that Dr. Obereit and myself, though seated at the same table, might be considered as the generals of two hostile armies, who are not personal enemies, and who, according to the custom of war, meet on certain occasions in a friendly way and treat each other with kindness; but afterwards again seize their arms, renew the conflict and fight with the same obstinacy as ever.

The following day he sent me a note, in which he with great politeness proposed to me to decide our whole dispute on Solitude, in private letters subject to the inspection of the lady whom he had seen at my house.

This I rejected; for the greatest part of my work on Solitude was then completed, and I had no inclination to burn my performance to oblige the doctor, who had indeed become rather more complaisant, and who probably expected nothing good from the calmness, composure and firmness of my behavior. Besides, there was nothing on earth that I dreaded so much as Obereit's private correspondence.

All disputes on Solitude between Obereit and me would be instantly accommodated, if one would but permit the other to believe what he chuses and what he can. Let every person believe what he pleases, if he only does what is right. The enthusiast entertains very different ideas concerning mysticism and seclusion, from him who examines those

subjects by the torch of reason and history. The violent desire which my friend Obereit formerly conceived to consign me to the torments of hell, because I opposed his precepts and his extravagant notions, will certainly never be again revived, when he sees with what candor I assign the reasons why I can forgive him that desire.

The history of Obereit's life * contains those rea-

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* The author having already given a sketch of the greatest part of the life of this singular character, the reader will not, perhaps, be displeased to find, by way of supplement, a brief notice of the most remarkable circumstances of his later years.

It has already been observed, that, in the year 1784, Obereit repaired to his friend Wieland at Weimar. It was during his residence there that the present work made its appearance. Immediately after its publication he wrote a satire against it, but which was much too feeble to produce the effect he intended.

After remaining half a year at Weimar, Obereit removed in 1785 to an obscure garret behind the church at Jena, where the contributions of Wieland and other compassionate friends afforded him a scanty subsistence. This period forms a new epoch in his life, which may with justice be denominated the philosophical, for modern philosophy now became and continued during the remainder of his life, his favorite study, so that his former mystical friends scarcely knew what to think of him. He however, soon effected a reconciliation with them by means of the talent which he possessed, of combining mysticism and knowledge, wisdom and folly, faith and reason into one system. Though he frequently wandered in the labyrinths of philosophy, and appeared to have relinquished all his former mystical ideas for the new career which he had adopted, yet he never failed to return at last to those doctrines which he had so long cherished.

Kant's Criticism of pure reason now began to produce a considerable ferment in the philosophical world at Jena, and

sons. It proves how utterly impossible it is for him to agree with me or me with him. It nevertheless

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Schmid held the first lectures on that subject. Obereit likewise determined to enter the lists, and to commence philosophical lectures, but he experienced at Jena the same disappointment which befel him at Winterthur. He then applied himself with the greater ardor to the private study of Kant's philosophy, attended the lectures of Schmid, and sometimes took an active part in Ulrich's disputations. The duke of Meiningen happening at this time to visit Jena, was so delighted with this eccentric philosopher, that he soon afterwards wrote to him, inviting him to Meiningen, where he promised him every accommodation he could desire; a proposal which Obereit joyfully accepted.

His residence at Meiningen, whither he removed in 1786, was extremely agreeable, and he was not a little flattered by the partiality shewn him by the duke and his court. He even took great delight in the company of the ladies, and established, or at least endeavored to establish an Arcadian Order of females, whose meetings were to be held in the ducal palace at Meiningen. Here his office of philosopher to the court, as he frequently styled himself, left him sufficient leisure to pursue his philosophical disquisitions; and his prolific pen produced numerous works, all of which were on metaphysical subjects.

Whether Obereit, the harmonizer of the greatest discordances, at length perceived that it was impracticable to reconcile the central philosophy to a life at court, or whether he was influenced by some other motive, it is impossible to determine; but after a residence of five years at Meiningen, he returned in the spring of 1791, with the approbation of the duke, who likewise granted him a pension, to Jena, in order as he himself said, to be present at the philosophical revolution which was then passing in that place, and likewise to collect rarities for the duke. He now lived at Jena, in very necessitous circumstances, supported entirely by the duke of Meiningen, prince Augustus of Gotha, Wieland, Bode, and some other friends. During the last years of his life he dined alternately with several professors of the university

exhibits him with more justice than he himself formerly shewed in many favorable points of view.

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of Jena; his literary exertions scarcely ever procuring him any remuneration.

While Obereit's internal man continued to receive so much refreshment from the modern philosophy, his external seemed to grow younger, and he entertained thoughts of entering a second time into the state of matrimony with a pious female of Jena. When he began to arrange the multitude of materials he had prepared for a history of his own life, he felt the want of a confidential assistant, to supply the place of his Psyche, and God, according to his own expression, directed him to a proper person. This intended match was however broken off.

Zimmermann having assured him by a friend that he respected him, and that nothing was farther from his thoughts than to give him pain by his strictures on his life and principles; Obereit was greatly rejoiced at this magnanimous declaration, and requested our author to furnish him with a recommendation to the empress Catherine, in the hope of being appointed her court-philosopher, literary secretary or librarian. With this request Zimmermann, for very obvious reasons, excused himself from complying.

In the spring of 1793 he removed to Dresden, to his brother, the philosophical studies of whose three sons, young men, about to enter into the world, he was requested to superintend. Who would not have wished him there to find till his end a peaceful asylum in the bosom of friendship! But, as if he was destined to be a continual wanderer during the whole of his earthly pilgrimage, he left Dresden about Easter, 1794, and repaired for the third time to Jena. From that place he wrote in April 1795 to M. Schlichtegroll, and after giving him a brief account of his philosophical career, he added, as if with a presentiment of the approaching final catastrophe: "And thus I close my *cursum philosophicum*, having, by the blessing of God, preserved the faculties of my head and heart unimpaired from the age of twelve, (when I laid the foundation of my philosophy, with respect to the equilibrium of all divine perfections, on which every

He is undoubtedly a man of sound principles, of an energetic mind, and inured to the practice of many rigid virtues. It is evident that he seeks truth with indefatigable industry and perseverance, and that he diffuses with zeal the theology of the heart. But in some points he has perhaps proceeded to too great lengths against me, without being aware of it himself. His ardent desire to annihilate me was, therefore, extremely natural and pardonable, because he

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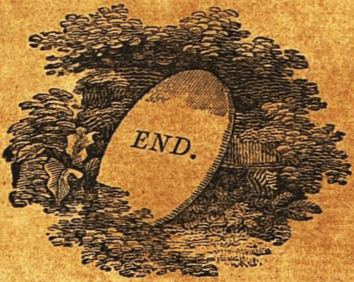
thing depends) till now, in my seventieth year. The infirmities of age and bodily pain, however, continually warn me to a *retirade en bon ordre*."

When we reflect on Obereit's philosophical career, how justly may we apply the observation which he makes on himself: "The progress of the human intellect effects in a century, in a few years, nay even in a single day or hour, new, great and extraordinary revolutions." His love of philosophy ceased only with his life, during the last years of which he was afflicted with a painful disorder. The following short but affecting account of his illness, penned with that delicate sensibility peculiar to the female mind, is given by Madame Fichte in a letter to a friend: "His pains during the last three weeks were frequently so excruciating, that his moans might be heard below in the house. He retained his faculties till the last moment, was always cheerful, and expressed the liveliest gratitude to those who carried him any refreshment. Upon the whole, his external situation was very distressing; for those who attended him were ignorant how a man of refined sensibility ought to be treated. Towards the conclusion of his life he had not indeed to struggle with the horrors of poverty; but before, he frequently wanted the necessaries of life, which his pension was never sufficient to procure.—I am fond of speaking of this good, honest creature, who had endeared himself to us all by his tried integrity." He expired February 2, 1798, in the 74th year of his age. T.

regarded me as a monster, who opposed his general reformation ; or at least as a spider, which an apostle of Solitude had a right to brush out of his beard.



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DIRECTIONS FOR PLACING THE PLATES.

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